



Clas.

Boct.

University of Chicago Library

GIVEN BY

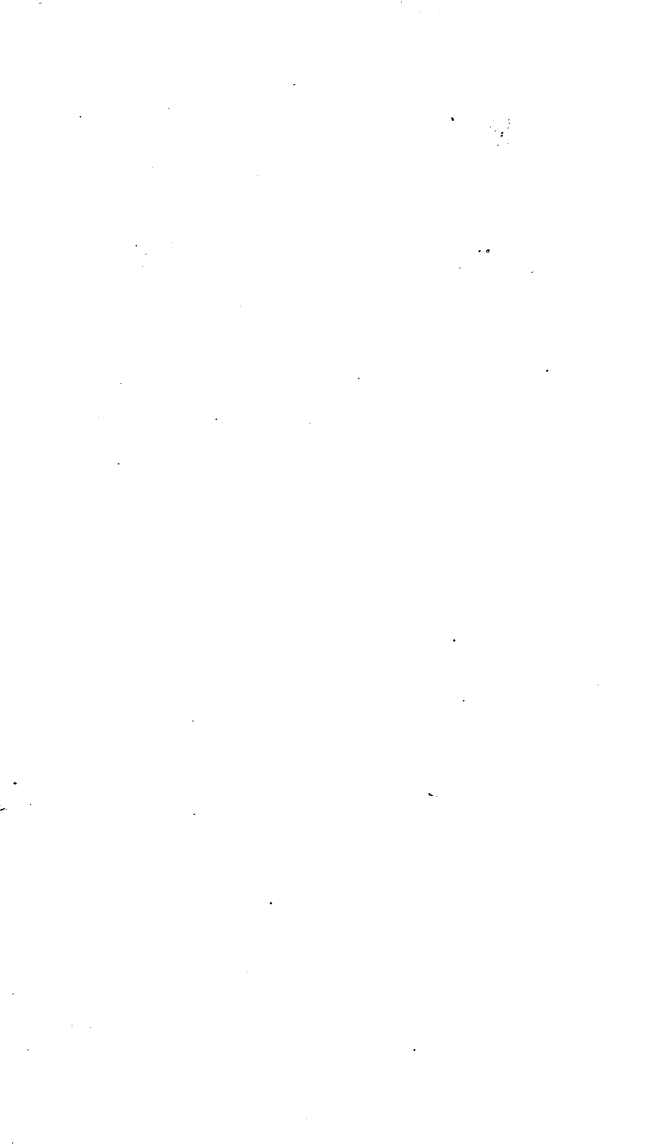
Besides the main topic this book also treats of

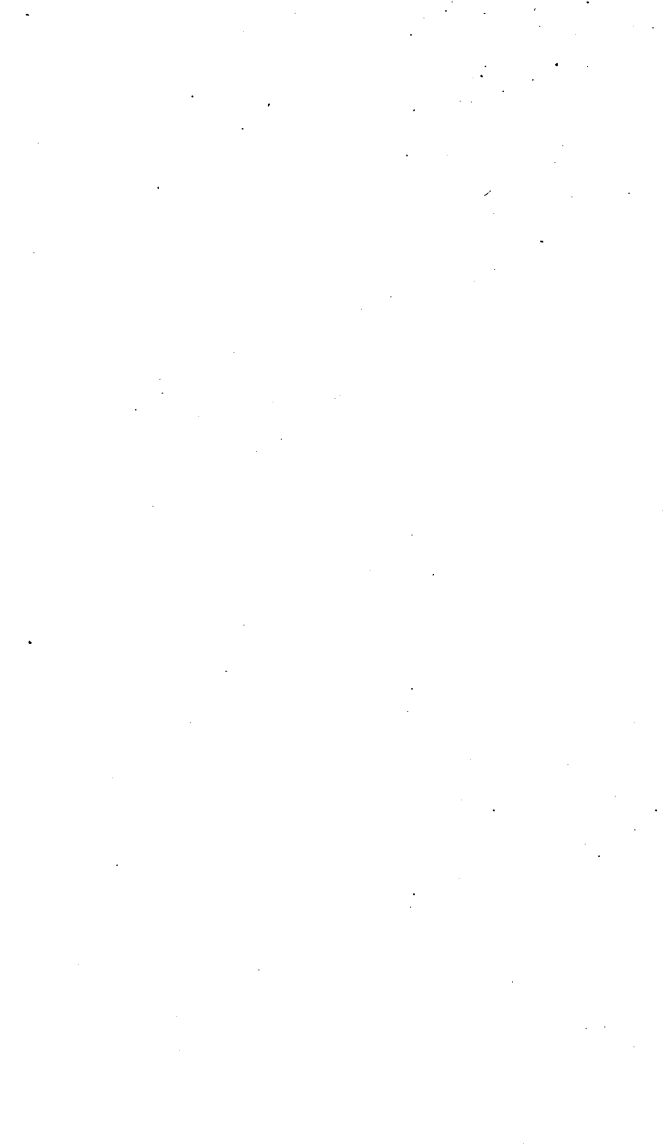
Subject No.

On page

Subject No.

On page





GOLD AND THE GOSPEL.

Prize Essays

ON THE

SCRIPTURAL DUTY OF GIVING IN PROPORTION
TO MEANS AND INCOME.

Constable, Henry.

New-York :

PUBLISHED BY CARLTON & PHILLIPS,

FOR THE TRACT SOCIETY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
200 MULBERRY-STREET.

1855.

BV 772
.G62

INTRODUCTION.

THE rights of God are by no means generally acknowledged in this fallen world. Men deem themselves the sovereign proprietors of whatever they can acquire. The silver and the gold are appropriated, with no well-defined sense of responsibility, to meet their own imaginary or real wants, and whatever is devoted to the cause of God is called *charity*! But shall we indulge the thought of giving to him his own? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." The failure to understand this fact, and act upon it, has retarded, for ages, the conversion of the world, and left countless generations to perish without the hope of redemption. It is matter of devout gratitude that the attention of the Church is now directed to this subject of momentous importance. Throughout the Christian world men are inquiring, with evident conviction of sad delinquencies, What

are the rights of God in relation to property? What is the measure of human responsibility in regard to the enterprises of the Church? And under the evident guidance of the Holy Spirit they are turning everywhere to the Bible, to see whether divine revelation has answered these questions. This is a most favorable indication. Powerful essays are called out by the anxious concern and noble benevolence of Christian philanthropists, which are demonstrating the law of Christian liberality with great clearness and force, and the Church is already feeling the elevating influence of the movement. The accounts of her various treasures indicate a progress, within the last five years, which is really amazing, but full of encouragement.

With these convictions, we welcome, with peculiar satisfaction, the Ulster prize essays, published under the title of Gold and the Gospel. They are well adapted to the American mind, and the inquiring and improving condition of the American Churches. Two of them we are most happy to present to our readers, devoutly praying that they may be accompanied everywhere by the divine blessing, producing conviction and prompt continued action in the spirit they suggest. They will by no means su-

persede, but certainly prepare the way for others, by American writers.

The power of *order* is acknowledged in almost everything. The merchant who conducts his business in a confused, irregular manner, fails. The mechanic who has not "a place for everything, and everything in its place," seldom attains skill in his department of labor. The agriculturist who has no method in cultivating the soil, is likely to "beg in harvest and have nothing." In the smallest matter we insist upon some regular plan, and in proportion as our schemes or duties rise in importance, the obligations of order increase. How unreasonable, then, that in the great work of religious benevolence, we should allow everything to be confused and accidental! Christians generally, there is reason to fear, give when they are importuned, and not unfrequently congratulate themselves when they escape: give by impulse, and more or less, as they happen to feel, or find it convenient under the circumstances. It is difficult to see how this can be accepted by the omniscient God as the fulfillment of a high religious duty. If the claim of the Church upon you be a valid one for the relief of the poor, for the support of education or the ministry, of Christian mis-

sions, or the Bible, tract, or Sunday-school cause, how can it be affected by the absence or presence of an importunate representative of the cause, or the failure to receive a formal application, with eloquent appeals, under the pressure of custom or example? That portion of your treasures which belongs to each and to all of these noble enterprises is your debt. No time—no circumstances can discharge it, without your voluntary act; and your interest as well as duty requires that it should be paid. To search out the objects of your benevolence—to inquire for the various treasures of the Lord, and with due promptness and regularity to pay over the proportion which is due, with many prayers for the divine blessing upon your appropriations, ought to be your highest privilege. When will the Church rise to this elevated standard?

JESSE T. PECK.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

Measure of Christian Liberality.

BY THE

REV. HENRY CONSTABLE, A.M.,

CURATE OF ATHNOWEN, DIOCESE OF CORK.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

It is the object of the following Essay to establish, that God has at all times laid down a standard by which man is to regulate his liberality in his cause, and that this standard has been the same for all dispensations. The writer is free to confess that, when led on the present occasion to consider this subject with attention, he was disposed to view it in a somewhat different light from that in which he has presented it here. He was inclined to think, that while Holy Scripture required of the Christian to honor God with a portion of his substance, that portion was left undetermined, and each was permitted to give just as his own conscience and judgment suggested. The more he considered the matter, however, in the light of reason and of Scripture, the more inclined he became to doubt the correctness of his opinion; until, at length, he came to the conclusion, that in this, as in other respects, God has laid down a rule by which Christians ought to walk. It may be that the arguments, almost wholly drawn from Scripture, which have convinced his own mind, may have the same effect on others. If they shall lead even a single worldling to perceive that he is not, in the disposition of his property, free from the claims of Him who is,

in fact, the sole great Proprietor of all; or if they shall induce any, who heretofore may have satisfied themselves with giving in the noblest of all causes some miserable portion wholly unworthy of Him to whom it is offered, to feel that more is required at their hands, he will not have written in vain. For the sake of convenience the Essay has been divided into the following chapters:—

- Chap. 1. God is the owner of all things.
“ 2. God is the disposer of all things.
“ 3. Man’s use of God’s goods has always been limited.
“ 4. It is reasonable to think this limit should be a definite one.
“ 5. A tenth required of mankind from the earliest times.
“ 6. Abraham and Jacob’s tenth.
“ 7. The Jewish tithe.
“ 8. The Jewish free-will offering.
“ 9. A tenth required from Christians.
“ 10. The Christian’s free-will offerings.
“ 11. The objects on which the Christian is to expend his offerings.
“ 12. Motives to liberality.
“ 13. A test of covetousness.

ON THE
MEASURE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

CHAPTER I.

"THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S AND THE FULLNESS
THEREOF."

THE leading maxim of a celebrated modern Socialist is, that "property is a crime." False and ruinous as such a maxim is in the mouths of those who proclaim war against property for the sake of plunder, and seek to overturn the powers that be in order to erect themselves into a tyranny, there is yet a point of view in which it is indisputable by the believer. Man has a right of property toward his fellow-man; he has none toward his God. Viewed in this latter light, no man can say that what he possesses is his own. For here comes in the prior, the inalienable claim of the great Maker and Owner of all things; and in regard of him the wealthiest and the most powerful descend at once from

the rank of proprietors to that of the stewards of another's rights.

Such is, unquestionably, man's relation to God, as placed before us in Holy Scripture. "All the earth is mine," is the Creator's claim; and who is prepared to deny it? Accordingly, he asserts his right, one by one, to each and every of those things which man prizes most. "Sanctify unto me all the first-born of the children of Israel, both of man and beast, it is mine." Of the land of Canaan—the land of so many promises—the land hardly obtained, after travel, and toil, and warfare, he said, "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine." "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." "All souls are mine."

If we turn to the pages of the New Testament, we shall find the same universal claim made and acted on. "Come and follow me," was the address of Christ to whomsoever he pleased, and whenever he pleased. It implied the forsaking of every earthly calling and possession, and yet was not asked as a favor, but as a right. "Walking by the sea of Galilee," he sees two brethren following their occupation of fishermen: he saith to them,

“Follow me, and they straightway left their nets and followed him.” Going further on, he sees two more occupied in the same pursuit. But these were the stay and comfort of a father. Shall he deprive an aged father of his sons? What matter? The Lord had need of them. The higher claim steps in before the lesser. To these, too, the call is given; “and they left the ship and their father, and followed him.” But some one may say, these were poor fishermen, and in asking them to forsake all he asked not for much. This were, indeed, poor reasoning, and would indicate a shallow acquaintance with the human heart. A man’s all is equally precious to him, whether it be little or great; and so He, who knew the heart, pronounced of the widow’s gift, that it was more than all the costly offerings of the wealthy, because, though in amount but two mites, it was in fact her all. But Matthew was not a poor man, and he was called from the midst of his gainful occupation. The young man whom Christ commanded to sell all that he had was noted for his riches; yet the same summons came to him that was addressed to the humble fishers by the sea of Galilee. How great the difference, however, between these parties! They recognized the claims of the Lord

to themselves and their possessions; he refused to do so. They perceived themselves to be but stewards; he held fast by the notion of ownership. They resigned their trust to Him who gave it; he usurped it. They were faithful in that which was another's, and obtained the true riches; he shut himself out by his unfaithfulness from the kingdom of God.

If we would see a picture of man's exact position in this respect drawn by the great Master's hand, we will find it in the remarkable parable of the talents, in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew. Who are they to whom the talents are given? They are all of them the servants of God. Whose are the talents? They are God's goods. For what are they given? To redound to the glory and praise of the Giver. Have they passed out of his control and thought? No; he exacts of them a strict account. True, to some is given more than to others: but all are in their respective talents on the exact same footing—that of managers in trust, and under a grave responsibility, of another's goods. It is quite true, indeed, that riches are not the only talents intrusted to man, or spoken of here; but they are certainly among them, and not the least important of them.

O vain man of the world, with thy heart set upon thy treasures, be they great or little, with the firm purpose to use them for thyself, and to call them and think them thine own, in what a light does Scripture place thee! Thou art in its searching eye but the usurper of another's rights—the breaker of a trust which thy God has given thee—the earner of vengeance when he comes to call thee to account. What would you think of him who was intrusted by his friend with property, who, during that friend's absence, appropriated this property to himself, and on his return denied that he had done him wrong? Great would be your indignation and severe your judgment, and yet thou art thyself the man! God has given you wealth, or the power and opportunity to get wealth; but thou hast said with prosperous and covetous Israel of old, that it was “thy own power, and the might of thy hand,” and the strength of thy intellect, which have done it all. You look not beyond your intellect to Him that gave it to you—beyond your enterprise to him that endowed you with it—beyond your bodily strength to him that made you strong—beyond the opportunities of your position to him that placed you in it. You contract your thoughts within second causes, and re-

flect not on the first great Cause. You bound your vision by the narrow horizon of your own making, and will not look beyond it, lest you should discover that you are, after all, in God's own world—a servant amid an innumerable ministry—a steward amid countless multitudes, who render, or must one day render, an account of their stewardship. O, reflect but for a moment on what an extended view into the realities of creation will bring before you! Behold the bright throng of angels, creatures of mighty power and transcendent intellect! They are busy; not one of them is idle. They pervade each part of the boundless universe; they visit each planet and star which stud infinite space; millions of them walk this earth. On whose business do they speed? For whom do they exercise their mighty energies? All is done *for God*. With ceaseless praise they behold his works; with ceaseless activity they do his will; proud even to wait upon sinful man, because they are sent by God. Or, cast your eyes even on those your fellow-creatures upon earth, whom at times you are disposed, perhaps, to regard as fools. Amid your ever-crowding businesses and your fast-succeeding pleasures you have, doubtless, heard of, you have occasionally met with, a peculiar peo-

ple. Observe them, mark them well. There may be hypocrites among them, but all are not hypocrites. There may be dross, but there is also gold. You will find one idea, to you a strange one, their ruling idea—it is that *they are not their own*; that all that they are and have, their time, their energies, their knowledge, their riches, their souls and bodies, belong to the God of their redemption. Yes, even here, at this time are, and at all times have been, such a people. Their graces obscured by infirmity and tarnished by sin, they are yet, in the actuating and governing principle of their minds, one with the unsullied angels, in that with them they ascribe to their Lord the undivided right to them and to theirs. Why should you stand upon a different footing? Are you not alike the creatures of God? Is it not from the same bounty on his part that *your* blessings are derived? Is not that bounty the great original fountain whence streams of goodness and love flow to every individual of the race? Cease, then, to speak of your possessions as your own; be wise, and call them what they are—a *trust from your God*.

CHAPTER II.

“IS IT NOT LAWFUL FOR ME TO DO WHAT I WILL
WITH MINE OWN?”

IF God be, in truth, the owner of all things, as we have seen from Scripture that he is, it follows, as a matter of course, that he is also the disposer of his property. “May I not do what I will with my own?” is the language of ownership; and without this power it is but an empty name. And so St. Paul says of the heir, while under age, and incapable of making disposition of his property, that he “differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all.” It plainly rests with God, then, in intrusting his property to man, to make what regulations he pleases for its disposal. What those regulations are, we will consider further on, and are now merely insisting on his right to make them. We apprehend, indeed, that there will be few, if any, to dispute this point—at least when they have calmly reflected on the matter. The owner of property among men, in engaging a steward over his estates, or a manager over his business, is never thought to exceed his rights

in defining to such parties the manner in which they are to transact his business. Surely the great Owner of the universe has an equal, or rather a far better right to do the same. He may indeed, as pleases him, see fit to place greater or less restrictions on human management; to leave man in a greater or less degree to his own judgment; to leave what portion he esteems suitable to man's discretion; or to tie up what portion he thinks fit to be used in a particular way. All that we contend for now is God's perfect right to interfere in what degree he pleases with man's management of his trusts. This point is, indeed, so plain—follows so necessarily from the conclusion of our first chapter, that to insist at further length upon it would be the merest waste of time. It only remains for us to inquire on what terms God has put us in trust with his goods; has he left us at an absolute freedom in their use? or has he pointed out how we are to use a portion of them, and what that portion is to be?

That God has not resigned to man the absolute disposal even of a portion of his trust we can prove beyond a doubt. The proof arises from this fact, that there is not a single gift of God to man which he does not with-

draw at pleasure. I argue upon the assumption, which no Christian disputes, that God's providence directs or overrules every event of every man's life; that there is no such thing as chance, and no power independent of God's. Now, let us run over in our minds the various gifts of God to man, and we will see that they have been, and continue to be, taken away from men of every variety and shade of character, the enemies and friends of God alike. The deluge deprived the world of the ungodly of their all, and fire from heaven did the same for the wicked inhabitants of Sodom. Saul had his crown wrested from him, and Israel and Judah were left without home, or possession, or native land, when the decree of God sent them captives to Assyria and Babylon. Abraham, the friend of God, gave up his country, and, in intention, his son, at the divine command: Lot barely escaped with life from Sodom, but left all his wealth behind: Job in one day lost servants and substance, sons and daughters, was left as naked of worldly goods as when he came from his mother's womb, yet nothing escaped from his lips but the words of pious submission to the great Disposer, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." So in the New

Testament, those cases on which we relied as proving God's ownership were, in fact, instances of his disposing of men's possessions, and need not be referred to further. And what are pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes, and other fearful judgments, but heaven-sent witnesses to the truth that God has not ceased to exercise sovereign authority in the disposal of his trust to man, or to control and withdraw that trust, or any portion of it, as seems fit to his discretion?

It may, perhaps, appear at first that I have dwelt too long on these preliminary points; but I have thought it better, where human covetousness and selfishness are so deeply concerned, to go to the root of the matter, to lay plainly before the mind God's full right and claim to all which we call ours, that we may be the less disposed to contest what his ordinary providence requires at our hands, viz., the application of a portion of our goods to his especial cause.

CHAPTER III.

“THOU MADEST HIM TO HAVE DOMINION OVER
THE WORKS OF THY HANDS.”

I HAVE hitherto considered God's claims in their widest, though at the same time their true and legitimate, extent, and have shown that they extend to the possession and disposal of our all. This should never be lost sight of by us, no matter how little God may seem disposed to insist on his fullest right. That he has insisted, and does at times insist, and may at any time he pleases insist upon it, with ourselves or others, with few or many, or all, is testified equally in the Book of Providence and the pages of Revelation: while the submission of our minds to this his sovereign authority, and the determination to bend to his will in this respect, if called upon, seems essential to the Christian character, according to that saying of our Lord, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

But there is a wide difference in God's *ordinary providence* between his claims, however rightful, and his requirements from

man. He has from time to time, indeed, put forward his fullest claim to man's all, lest it should be forgotten, and at last perhaps denied; just as he has, from time to time, wrought miracles to show, along with other reasons, that he has not resigned to what is called the course of nature his control over her laws. But in his usual course he does not act thus. Of his trust to man he leaves him a large portion to use for his own especial comfort and benefit. Having endowed him with reason and judgment, he has left much at his discretion. Wishing his happiness, he has bestowed his gifts to produce and to increase it, and has given him "richly all things to enjoy." He has, indeed, forbidden the abuse of the smallest portion of his goods; the spending of any, however trifling a proportion, in any way that would militate against his glory or the advancement of his cause in the world; and has, in fact, required as much in that portion which man spends upon himself as in that which he devotes especially to his Maker and Redeemer, that "all should be done with an eye to the glory of God." With these important considerations, which must never be forgotten by the Christian, he has left him at liberty in the use of a large proportion of his trust.

Thus has God treated his creature man in a liberal spirit. He has not fettered him with restrictions meeting him at every step. Having gifted him with a noble capacity and large susceptibilities of enjoyment, he has placed him in a situation, and allowed him a freedom, which affords ample scope for both. It was not a mockery of his real condition to describe him as made "in God's image" in the matter of dominion. And truly as well as beautifully has David celebrated the power bestowed by God upon his creatures,—“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.”

But what we do contend for now is this, that to man's discretionary use of God's trust to him there is, and has always been, a limit. He may expatiate in a wide field, but not a boundless one. He shall indeed feel himself at freedom in the use and enjoyment of temporal blessings, but there shall be at the same time something to remind him that there is One above him to whom these things, after all, belong, and by whom they have been intrusted to him. The wide ocean might seem to be without a master, rolling its huge billows where it pleased, were it not met by that restraining shore—those

bars and doors which he hath placed who said to it, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." And just so might man imagine himself without a superior—the original, not the delegated, lord of this lower world, unless he too were met with a bound beyond which he might not pass; unless, in the disposal of his property, there were a portion placed out of his discretion, of which God had said, "This may not be used for thy pleasure; *it is mine.*"

Even in Eden it was so. Even to man, just come from his Maker's hands, the voice, scarce silent, that had called all things into being, the impress of Heaven's workmanship still fresh and vivid upon the creation, even to unfallen Adam, this limit was placed. The fruit of his fairest trees, and the seventh part of his time, were hallowed. He might not touch the one, nor infringe upon the other. They were the peculiar property of Him who had placed him in the garden to dress it and to keep it—the sign and token of his inalienable sovereignty.

If this were the case with sinless man, how much more does sinful man require it? "Who is lord over us?" is the suggestion of the natural heart. Deny it, or disguise it as

they will, practical independence of God is the darling aim of the natural man, in all his ways, in the use of all his talents, and, among them, of his substance. To use it just as he pleases himself,—on his pleasures, on his vanities, subservient to the attainment of power, or, as in the miser's case, to hoard and worship it for itself, is the determination and the habit of the unregenerate mind. To use it *as God pleases*—with a thankful spirit for his own purposes, with as thankful a spirit when expended on objects foreign to himself—this is not in all his thoughts. And this tendency remains in the merely regenerate. Checked, conquered, crucified, it is still there, perhaps, to his dying day, a lurking, treacherous foe. Too often it insensibly influences the conduct and thoughts of God's saints. Unseen and unsuspected, it breathes a noxious vapor, deadening the liberality, and checking each generous impulse; or, watching its opportunity, it comes forth and lords it for a time with all its former sway. How absolutely necessary, then, that there be a perpetual check to this universal tendency!—a perpetual reminder to man that he is not a sovereign, but a subject; that his goods are not his own, but God's: and this is found in that perpetual ordinance in force

in patriarchal, and Jewish, and Christian times alike, whereby God has reserved for his own especial glory and service a portion of that which in his bounty he has bestowed on man. This is the rent which reminds the tenant that he is not owner in fee; this is the interest which reminds the borrower that the principal belongs not to him; this is the tribute-money, which reminds a subject nation that it is not independent; this is God's share, to remind his creature that all belongs to him.

What that proportion may be is not the subject of the present chapter, but will be discussed in those that follow. All that is here insisted on is this, which every page almost of the Old and New Testament asserts, that while to God belongs our all, and while at times he insists on this his claim, he *at all times* requires from us *a portion* of our goods, a tribute to his sovereignty, and a means of spreading his name and glory throughout the world.

CHAPTER IV.

“THE WAY OF MAN IS NOT IN HIMSELF.”

I HAVE thus prepared the way for the consideration of the chief point of inquiry in our essay, What is the proportion of his means which the Christian should give to God? The Lord's right to a portion, or to all, will not now be contested; nor will it be denied that he actually claims a part. It remains to be seen if we have any sufficient reason to decide what that part should be. Has God left the decision of this important matter to each man's conscience and judgment, or has he made known his own will thereon?

I do not think that any *à priori* reasoning can determine this point,—at least with such as are disposed to reduce God's claims to as small a compass as they can; but I certainly think that the weight of antecedent probability is in favor of his having done so. Let us remember, at this stage of our inquiry, that the gift of *any portion*, no matter what, of our goods to the bestower of them does not appear by any means to be a natural suggestion of the mind, as some might sup-

pose. To propitiate an offended Being with presents does, indeed, appear natural to man; but it was not with such a view at all that the men of enlightened religion, such as Abraham, offered their gifts to God. They regarded their Maker as their friend, and gave him a portion of their substance in thankful acknowledgment that it was he who had given it all. Now, if we reflect, we will see that this is by no means an obvious conclusion to come to. The recipient of bounty with ourselves does not feel himself called on to return a portion of that bounty to the giver. And far less would he feel the necessity of such return when it was God who was the bestower, from the consideration that he, who had all things in his power, could not possibly want anything at his creatures' hands. If, then, it be but reasonable to suppose that it was God who first claimed from the creature a portion of his gifts, it seems equally reasonable to suppose that he mentioned what that portion was to be. This is the natural inference, unless we are to suppose that *anything*, no matter how mean, and trifling, and worthless, is sufficient *for God*. But few, I imagine, will suppose this, who reflect upon the goodness and greatness of God as seen in the crea-

tion; and most assuredly none will allow it, who will learn God's character from his own account of it in Scripture, where they find him rejecting with disdain the unsuitable acknowledgment of his mercies. If it be, then, a matter of importance what is the suitable proportion that man should give, does it not seem most likely that he, who could best determine this, and alone with authority to determine it, should, indeed, have done so? Man were else left to a painful uncertainty. The scrupulous mind, anxious to please God, could never be certain of having done so, and would, in many instances, even when far exceeding the expected proportion, be yet subject to perplexity and uneasiness; while in the case of, we fear, the vast majority of mankind, the fact of this portion being left entirely to their discretion would be made the pretext of their reducing it to so small a point that the gift, so far from honoring God, would rather be an affront to his name.

For these and other reasons, I think that the probability is, that God would himself decide this matter, and declare plainly what proportion of man's substance he expected as a suitable tribute to his sovereignty, a becoming token of our gratitude, and a suf-

ficiency to uphold his worship in the world. But on this point I will not argue any further. To some it may appear of force; to others it may seem destitute of strength. All that I will require to be conceded is, that at any rate no antecedent improbability lies against my argument. The great and deciding arguments must be drawn from other sources; and, beyond all others, from the inquiry, "What hath God said?" Has he spoken to us in that Book which is the lamp to our feet and the lantern to our paths, or has he been silent there? If he has spoken there, clearly then the controversy is decided with those to whom this essay is addressed,—namely, such as take the Bible for their one infallible guide; if he has not spoken, I should despair of deciding it by any other reasoning. But that he has done so,—not merely for one time, dispensation, or people, but for all times and dispensations,—that he has done so for us Christians, as he did for his ancient people Israel, is the conclusion to which a careful examination of Scripture has led me, and which I will endeavor to prove in the following pages.

In pursuing my inquiry, I will first advert to the fact of a certain proportion being found among a great variety of nations as

the measure of their gifts to God ; I will then examine what the Old Testament has said upon this subject,—not confining myself to any one part of it, but examining its several notices upon the subject ; satisfied that each throws light upon and confirms the rest, and that the whole taken together with the evidence of the New Testament leads to one incontrovertible conclusion. The conclusion is, that God requires from men in general a tenth-part of that increase with which he blesses them to be spent in his especial cause ; while from some more peculiarly favored he looks for more : the gift of the former portion being to be regarded as a positive duty, that of the latter as the free-will offering of loving and grateful hearts, left in its amount to each according as he is disposed to act, according as circumstances seem to call for an extended liberality, or his own generous and grateful impulses, quickened by a sense of God's exceeding goodness, lead him to bestow it. Our review of the Old Testament will lead me to dwell chiefly on four points,—namely, the gift of a tenth by Abraham to Melchizedek, Jacob's vow of a tenth to God, God's requirement of a tenth from his people Israel, and that people's free-will offerings

on extraordinary occasions over and above their tenth.

And may He, whose office it is to guide to truth, by enlightening the understanding, and purifying the wills of his people, guide us in our inquiry on this important subject, enable us to perceive what is revealed to us, and to regulate our practice thereby.

CHAPTER V.

“IS HE THE GOD OF THE JEWS ONLY?”

THAT God has in the case of his people Israel required the tenth of man's substance to be given for his service, and expended as the circumstances of that dispensation required, is not disputed. The first question, then, that meets us is, When did he first require it? Was this, *as a divine institution*, first imposed on a particular nation, and first ordained in the Mosaic law, or does it date from a much higher antiquity? Do we draw our first great argument with Christians, that it is their duty to devote a tenth to their Lord from the fact of their being the successors of Israel, to whom it was a duty, or can we appeal to an earlier authority, before Moses gave the law from Sinai, or Abraham was separated from the Gentile world? It will be perceived, that I rest my great reliance in this question on the *divine institution* of this proportion of a tenth. I certainly do so. I am fully persuaded, that if it has not this foundation to rest on, other arguments, however forcible with individ-

uals, will have no overpowering weight to silence the objections or overcome the natural selfishness of the mass of men, even of men professing godliness.

The mere fact that this or that person, however wise and pious, gave a tenth of his goods to God, and that God was pleased with his servant for thus honoring him with his substance, will not, I think, come home with such conclusive power to the Christian's conscience as will make him say that he is to do the same, as an act of duty expected from him by his God. Man's ingenuity, quickened by his selfishness, will, in such a case, straightway set to work to discover some differing circumstances between such individuals and himself, as will, in his opinion, fully excuse him from the necessity of imitation. He will say, suppose, of Abraham and Jacob, "These were men who attained to far greater wealth than I am possessed of, nor had they in those simple ages the same pressing calls upon their means which dayly meet me; I am, therefore, no more bound by their voluntary act to give a tenth, than I am bound to give a half because Zaccheus gave one, or to give the whole of my substance, because the first Christians of Jerusalem did so." And if he

is reminded that Abraham and Jacob's acknowledgment to God were blessed by him, he can also reply that Zaccheus's conduct was approved by Christ, and that of the saints of Jerusalem mentioned by an inspired writer as indicating a love and a self-denial beyond all praise. Men will, in fact, find so many reasons, to them at least plausible and convincing, why they are not bound by such voluntary acts of individuals, that, while they are free to confess that God expects from them, too, *a portion* of their substance, they will wholly deny any necessity of that portion being a tenth. And so we shall be forced to leave the matter to each man's judgment and discretion; and while some few will not feel this to be any release, many more will seize upon it as a full excuse for the miserable share they give to God,—which, perhaps, they call “honoring him with their substance,” but which is far more like dishonoring him with their niggardliness.

I, therefore, place my main reliance in this argument on the proportions of a tenth being of divine institution. Other arguments need not be discarded, but in their place may come in with such force as they possess. But it is on God's ordinance of the

thing that I rely, and without it I should despair of establishing the matter. Now we have without any controversy his institution of this proportion in the Mosaic ritual, and even if we could trace the institution no higher—if we were forced to allow that here first was the payment of a tenth to God imposed as a duty upon each member of his Church, even from this, as I trust will be seen in a succeeding chapter, can be shown that the same proportion is required from the members of the Christian community. But I apprehend that a far earlier origin may reasonably be concluded for the divine institution of a tenth—that it probably dates from the very first promulgation of fallen man's religion, that it certainly dates from times long anterior to that of the law of Moses.

The argument is one to which no claim of originality can be made, and is simply this: We find that, as well among the ancestors of the Jewish nation as among Gentile nations remote from and unconnected with each other, the payment of a tenth for purposes of religion was a recognized custom, pointing clearly to a common authoritative origin, which could be no other than the command of God. To give instances of this

custom would far exceed the limits of the present essay ; they may be found in detail in the learned writings of Spelman and Selden, who have traced back the custom of dedicating tithes to religious purposes to a very remote antiquity. The statements of two of our ablest writers on this point are so forcible that I will quote them in preference to any language of my own. "Whatever custom," says Dr. Kennicott, "has prevailed over the world, among nations the most opposite in polity and customs in general, nations not united by commerce or communication, (when that custom has nothing in nature or the reason of things to give it birth, and establish to itself such a currency,) must be derived from some revelation, which revelation may in certain places have been forgotten, though the custom introduced by and founded on such revelation still continued ; and, further, this revelation must have been made antecedent to the dispersion at Babel, when all mankind, being but one nation, and living together in the form of one large family, were of one language and governed by the same laws and customs." Collyer, in his "Sacred Interpreter," writes to the same effect: "From Pagan writers we learn," he says, "that

several nations, very far distant from each other, in different parts of the world, and, as it seems, without the least acquaintance or commerce one with another, observed this custom. Now, since this proportion of one in ten is certainly indifferent in itself, any more than one in seven or eight, it is reasonable to believe that this custom of paying tithe, like that of sacrificing, had some divine direction for it; and that it was derived from Adam to Noah, and from him to his posterity, till at length, at the dispersion of Babel, it spread over all the world." The conclusion of Kennicott and Collyer is surely the conclusion of unprejudiced reason. The wide-spread establishment of a custom, which does not certainly suggest itself naturally to the mind, and which requires of man the surrender of what he values most, can be accounted for in no other way. Even if men in different places might agree in giving a portion of their goods to God, they would not all hit upon the same proportion. Some would give more, others less, and probably no two would be agreed. It may, perhaps, somewhat serve to confirm this argument, to show its force in other cases. For instance, the divine origin of the institution of sacrifice is generally admitted

among Christians. Now what is the proof on which men rely for it? We read indeed in Scripture of the offering of sacrifices from the very earliest times, but in no part are we told that God had first appointed that mode of worship. Its origin is not told us in the Book of Genesis, nor does any subsequent scripture refer to it. Its divine institution is received chiefly on these grounds, that while there appears no reason for supposing that the propriety of such a mode of worship would naturally suggest itself to the minds of all men, there has yet never been a nation, however remote or ancient, among whom this practice has not prevailed. Hence we learn to refer it to one common authoritative origin,—to attribute it to the command of God to mankind, when mankind formed but a single family, which family, in its subsequent increases, separations, and migrations, would carry into every land the original tradition, more or less impaired, or altered, or obscured by the various phases of the superstitious and cruel idolatries, which everywhere, alas! overspread and debased the primitive religion of mankind. I think, then, that we are justified in concluding that the origin of the giving of a tenth was God's express command,—a con-

clusion reasonable even at this stage of our argument, and which, as it appears to me, when taken in connection with the succeeding proofs, will amount to an evidence convincing and entire. I will now direct attention to the declarations of Scripture on this head, where we will find every notice of it, and every inference deducible from its notices, in full and perfect harmony with our argument.

CHAPTER VI.

“OF ALL THAT THOU SHALT GIVE ME, I WILL
SURELY GIVE THE TENTH UNTO THEE.”

WE have reason to conclude from Scripture that every important part of human worship and obedience has had its origin, not from man, but directly from God himself. Man did not form his religion from the dictates of his own reason and conscience, but received it by revelation; and it has ever formed one grand distinction between false religions of every shade and the true, that the former have, in greater or less degree, sprung from what St. Paul calls “will-worship,” while the latter has adhered to the declared will of God, neither daring to add to nor detract therefrom. True worship never sprang from the earth, and ascended with acceptance to heaven; but from heaven she came to earth, and thence went back, a welcome visitant to her original home, the bosom of God.

—No worship of man’s own choosing, that is, no heresy, was ever acceptable to God; to all such he replies, “Who hath required

this at your hands?" So persuaded was Mr. Hallet of the force of this, that he does not hesitate to pronounce that God's acceptance of Abel's offering was "a demonstration" of its being in obedience to the divine commandment, according to that obvious maxim of all true religion, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Even apparently minute and unimportant matters have not been thought by God unworthy of notice, or the deviation from them undeserving of condemnation. How minute, for example, are the directions of the Levitical law, and yet how sorely was their infraction punished, as witness the account of Korah and his company, of Uzzah, and many others. And hence we have Scriptural reason for supposing that the important matter of the proportion of man's acknowledgment to God was not left undetermined,—that believers, in the early days of the world, did not offer their tenth to God from their own spontaneous impulse, but in obedience to a known commandment. And if it be said that this argument might hold good for the direction of a *portion* of man's substance being given to God, but that God would, probably, leave the exact proportion to each believer's own

discretion, we answer, that he has himself shown that the proportion of the gift is not beneath his notice, for in the Mosaic law he has ordained a tenth.

The institution of the Sabbath day affords a parallel case, and one bearing very forcibly, as it appears to me, on our present inquiry. In acknowledgment of the great fact of the creation, and of the sovereign power of the Creator over his creature, God would have man to dedicate a portion of his time to his service. Did he then leave this portion undefined? Had he done so, humanly speaking, we would not have had a Sabbath day at all. Men, left to their own judgment, would have varied from each other in the portion set apart. Indolence and aversion to spiritual things would narrow and curtail that portion, till, at length, the very semblance of it would have vanished from among men. But he strictly defined its duration in the beginning, and, on the giving of the law to Israel, repeated that definition; and so we Christians have the Sabbath day, the sweet season of bodily rest and spiritual activity, whose observance is the great means of upholding religion in the world, and which ever points the hopes of the way-worn pilgrim of the cross to his

eternal rest. If, then, the proportion of man's time that was to be specially dedicated to God has been dictated by him, is it not in strict analogy that he should also have defined the proportion of man's substance? And if this, and the offering of sacrifices, and, in fact, every other portion of worship, were revealed from on high, this is surely a Scriptural argument for concluding that this part alone was not left unrevealed, in what way and with what proportion of his goods man should honor the Creator and Giver of all!

Before we come to the consideration of the tenth prescribed in the Mosaic law, we have two extremely important references made to them in the Bible: the first is Abram's gift of a tenth to Melchizedek, and the second Jacob's vow of the same proportion to God. To both of them particular attention is due. The first of them, in all its circumstances, forms one of the most marvelous episodes in Scripture history. It brings forward, for a moment, upon the stage that man of mysterious origin and existence — Melchizedek, to whom David makes one glorious allusion, and of whom Paul speaks in language which, while it heightens our veneration, increases our won-

der, till, lost in amazement, we are ready to muse in our hearts, as the people did of John, "whether he were indeed the Christ or not." However this be, the transaction is an important one in our argument. It agrees most completely with our hypothesis of the divine origin of the tenth, and with no other; and the time when it occurred, and the persons concerned in it, make it of peculiar force.

Chedorlaomer and his confederate kings make war on the king of Sodom and his associates, and prevail in battle. The victors seize upon the persons and goods of the vanquished, and with them of Lot and his goods, and proceed with them to their own country. Abram, hearing of his nephew's captivity, arms his dependents—probably few in number compared with those against whom they went—overtakes them on their return, defeats them, and recovers Lot and all the persons and goods that had been carried off. To God he owed his victory, and to God was due an acknowledgment of his aid. Accordingly, returning, he meets God's high-priest, and to him he pays a tenth of all the spoils.

Now, every part of this transaction has force. The goods, let it be remembered, had been all of them the property of those

to whose rescue Abram had gone; none of them had belonged to the party of Chedor-laomer, and, consequently, Abram's only claim to them lay in his having recovered them in battle. This did give him a claim, which the king of Sodom was willing to acknowledge, but which Abram wholly refused to profit by for himself: "I will not take," he said, "anything that is thine." Now this, I think, places his gift to Melchizedek in a far stronger light than it would have been in, had we viewed it as simply having been an acknowledgment to God for having restored to him his own property, or for having placed within his hands the property of the kings he had subdued. He had in the transaction gained nothing for himself; he will accept of nothing for himself; he disowns his own claim to any portion of the spoils. But he evidently knew that God had his claim to a part of them, in token of his right to all; and the only use he will make of a victory, which had placed all in his possession, is to pay to God his portion of a tenth: the rest he returns to the original owners. This fact, I think, inconsistent with any other theory than that here advocated—that the gift of a tenth was *at this time* of divine appointment. Had the goods been

his own, it might have the appearance of a voluntary act of gratitude ; but, since he refused any personal right in them for himself, it has all the appearance of being an act of known and recognized duty. If they had been his own, he might, doubtless, have given to God what proportion of his goods he pleased ; but, as they were not his own, he would scarcely have been generous with another's property. He surrendered his own claim, but he could not surrender God's. The tenth which he gave him he must have felt was not his to withhold,—that it was the peculiar property of him to whom all belonged.

With this agrees every other circumstance of the narrative. Thus the manner in which it is spoken of is just that in which a thing of usual and expected occurrence would be mentioned. Were it new or unusual, some notice of the novelty might be expected, as we are told in Scripture of the invention and introduction of other and far less important matters. But this is treated of as a matter of course. Again, Abram's gift is accepted by Melchizedek plainly as his right. As God's priest he blesses Abram, and as God's priest he receives tithes from Abram. The one appears just as much a part of his office

as the other. Now, this gift of a tenth was certainly an act of religion. It was not required by Melchizedek from any poverty of circumstances, for he was a king, and probably a richer man than Abram. It was purely an act of religious homage, and so St. Paul reckons it in the seventh chapter of Hebrews.

The same apostle's comparison of Melchizedek with the Levitical priesthood, and his assertion of the superiority of the former over the latter, absolutely requires us to believe that the payment of a tenth by Abram to him was not a voluntary act, which he might have withheld at pleasure, but was the discharge of positive obligation. If we consider his argument with a little attention we will not fail to see this. The Levitical priesthood, *by the command of God*, received tithes of their people. *Their command to do so* is noticed by the apostle in the fifth verse as their privilege, and is certainly a most important part of it. But it follows as certainly that Melchizedek had *the same* claim to a tenth from Abram which they had from the Jews,—that is, a divine command. If you deny this, and say that Abram's gift of a tenth was purely voluntary—that Melchizedek had no positive right to this propor-

tion—that it might have been withheld from him without any infringement on his just claims, you certainly place him in this respect on an inferior footing to the priesthood of Aaron, and take away one of those grounds on which St. Paul claims for him a superiority over Levi—namely, his right to a tenth from Abram. This latter argument appears a conclusive one, and seems to follow from the apostle's comparison of the two orders of priesthood in the seventh chapter of Hebrews. For surely, if a tenth were Levi's right by divine ordinance, while Melchizedek had no such right at all, he is in this respect inferior to Levi, and Paul's argument from his reception of a tenth from Abram an inconclusive one.

This case being then established, the time of the occurrence and the persons engaged in it render it of peculiar value. It took place before the covenant or circumcision was ordained; before the first step was taken toward the formation of that Jewish constitution which was developed under Moses; and, consequently, wholly free from the inference (a groundless one, as we shall afterward see) that, being a part of the Mosaic dispensation, it has been done away in Christ. Again, to whom was this tenth paid? To

Melchizedek. I will not inquire here who Melchizedek was. It is beside our object, and perhaps beyond our power to determine. It is sufficient to say, that of all the personages of the Old Testament he is preëminently the type of Christ. Neither Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, nor Aaron, their high-priest, nor Joshua, the renowned captain to lead them to their promised Canaan, nor David, triumphant over his people's enemies, nor Solomon, reigning in glory over a united and peaceful community, are to be compared as types of Christ with that great king of righteousness and peace, who was also, in a sense that none before or since, save the glorious Antitype, have been—*the priest of God*.

It was then to a person who was the peculiar type of the Head of the Christian dispensation, and in times peculiarly prophetic of the Christian era, as well as at a period distinguished by a plain mark of separation from all that might be distinctive of Judaism, we find this payment of a tenth to God in force by his own command. When we come to speak of the Christian's obligation in this respect to God we will draw our inference from this important transaction, and will now pass on to consider another of equal

value in our argument—the celebrated vow of the patriarch Jacob.

With what deep delight does the believer's mind dwell on the vision of Bethel! Sin had placed an infinite distance between heaven and earth, but here we find the communication of these two reopened, and sweet communion established. The scene is, indeed, a bright spot amid a dark world—a green, smiling region within a surrounding desert—a transfiguration scene, which lights up the earth again with its former brightness, and points to the time when it shall be said of it with truth, “It is good to be here.” It draws back the mind to that golden age when God walked with his newly-formed creature as with a friend; and draws it on to the restoration of that age when the believer shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. But our argument confines us to a single feature in this transaction. Jacob, flying from his brother, lies down at the close of day to refresh himself in sleep. Alone he could not be, for he was the object of that care which never slumbers, and which selected the time when he seemed most friendless to display itself most fully. In his vision of the night he beholds the in-

habitants of heaven, and heaven's great King, and hears from his lips the assuring promise of provision for "the life that now is, as well as for that which was to come." He awakes from sleep impressed with the certainty, that this was, indeed, a "heaven-sent dream." The spirit of Jacob was the free spirit of all God's children. They bargain not to be admitted to his favor, but having "freely received they freely give;" having been bought with a precious price, and loved with an endless love, they devote themselves and theirs to their redeeming God. Such was the spirit of Jacob. What he should do for God in the heavenly rest to which he looked forward after his pilgrimage, he leaves for the arrival of that rest to determine: what he should do in the present time while his day lasted, like a wise man he determines. "The Lord shall be my God," is his resolution, "and this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will give the tenth part unto thee."

Our object confines us to noticing only the latter part of Jacob's vow—namely, the devoting a tenth of all his future increase to God. Having shown already, and particularly in the case of Abram, that the giving

a tenth of our goods to God was in conformity with the divine command, we view Jacob's conduct in the same light. We regard him not as performing what he esteemed a mere voluntary act, but as discharging a sacred obligation; as making that return to God for his bounty which he knew to be expected from him. If we have consented to the reasoning in Abram's case we can scarcely doubt that Jacob, his grandson, and of course acquainted with his conduct, acted on the same motives. He is a link connecting together evangelical and legal times—the days of Melchizedek and those of Moses; exhibiting the harmonious action of believers in varying dispensations in obedience to an unchanged commandment. Regarded thus, it places our subject in, perhaps, a fuller and plainer light, more divested of circumstances not essentially connected with it, than any other similar transaction; and certainly supplies some matters of moment, which we could not with certainty have inferred from Abram's offering of a tenth.

And, first, Jacob's vow is a vow of all future blessing, and, therefore, to be continued through his lifetime. We might, perhaps, have supposed that Abram's offering this proportion was an isolated act on his

part, called forth on a particular occasion. If such were our opinion, Jacob's vow corrects it. This proportion was God's due at *all periods* of the believer's earthly existence; whether at times when God more plainly and more remarkably opened his hand and filled him with abundance, or when in the ordinary course of his providence he "blessed his basket and his store." It was to be called forth, not merely on such occasions as the victory of a few over many, which restored to its owners what had seemed lost beyond recovery; but was also to be the return for those more unobtrusive but equally eloquent proofs of the divine goodness, which nature in her revolving course presents—that sun which gives life to the creation, those dews which refresh earth's parched surface, those "rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, which fill man's heart with food and gladness." Such is one lesson we learn from Jacob's vow—"Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Again, Jacob's vow is to be regarded as of importance in this respect, that no part of it was for the use of a priesthood. Melchizedek had gone as he had come; the priesthood of Levi was not yet in being; the priest of Jacob's household was Jacob him-

self. Yet now, as well as before or after, was this proportion of a tenth paid to God. Now, this fact is of value. It separates the matter wholly from man's jurisdiction, and places it in its simple original light, as an act of pure, unmixed homage to God. When there was no ministry to support, it was yet God's claim, and accorded to him. I do, therefore, value this fact highly. Had the tenth never been given save in connection with a ministry, this might with some minds have obscured its great primary object. But here nothing stands between the offerer and the Being to whom he offers—no class or caste may presume to say, "This is ours, it was ordained for us;" for here we see it to be God's and God's only, ordained for his sole glory. Now, I am not arguing against the claim of God's ministry to a portion of this tenth; far from it. We will see, that in its distribution, they are in Christian as in Jewish times to be considered as entitled to maintenance from it. I am simply laying down this fact, drawn from Jacob's case, that the institution of a tenth had this for its first, and I may say its sole object, the glorifying God in the offering to him a portion of that which all came from him, and which all, in fact, belonged to him. What God wills us

to do with it, how to use it, and in what proportion, is another question altogether. But this we may be sure of, that it was for God it was ordained, that he might be glorified in that which was his.

The last consideration, that in Jacob's time no portion of the tenth was for the use of a priesthood, while it was yet paid to God, helps to make certain what we have previously shown to be at any rate probable, that this custom dates from the beginning; that when the Sabbath-day was hallowed, and sacrifices ordained, then, too, a tenth was fixed on by God as the portion which man was to return to him. It might have been supposed, from the instances of Melchizedek and Levi, that this proportion was ordained for a priesthood, and therefore had its origin on the first formation of a separate ministry. Now, we do not reckon the heads of families to have been a separate order analogous to the Jewish priesthood or the Christian ministry. Melchizedek seems to have been the first to exercise by divine appointment a ministerial care over those not connected with him by the ties of family, and some might thence imagine that in his time the gift of a tenth was introduced. But the case of Jacob overturns this idea. Required in

his time without any reference to a priesthood, there was the same reason at all previous times for its existence; and therefore we may infer, that it was the ordinance of God, not merely when Melchizedek walked upon the earth, or the sons of Aaron were sustained by it, but also when Adam lived by the sweat of his brow, and his children pursued their occupations of shepherds and husbandmen. I know not if this throws any light upon the much-vexed question of Cain and Abel's offering. It was on the part of both an act of religious homage. Cain seems to have expected as his right that his offering would have been accepted, which he could scarcely have done if he had not known it to have been commanded. *Was not this his tenth*, which the reason even of the natural man allows to be due to God, and which therefore Cain offered, while he disdained *such an offering* as spoke of atonement? Abel in the firstlings of his flock paid his tenth, and also confessed his faith in a sinner's religion, which is the religion of atonement. Cain in the fruit of the ground paid his tenth too, but he would make no confession of sin, acknowledge no need of a Saviour—a type of those later Pharisees, who would not so much as de-

fraud God of the tithe of their garden herbs, while they disdained the atonement of Christ and shed his innocent blood. To this the language of God to Cain seems fully to agree: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" that is, "If thou art righteous, thou hast indeed made me the only offering I could require—an acknowledgment of my sovereignty and a return for my bounty;" but "if thou doest not well," if thou be not righteous, "thy offering is not sufficient, thy sin still lies at thy door unremoved, and I can be pleased with no work of thine;" or, if we prefer Archbishop Magee's translation, who for "sin" reads "sin-offering," then God, in plain language, tells him that for the removal of his unrighteousness animal sacrifice was required, typical of the efficacious sacrifice of Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

“ALL THE TITHE OF THE LAND IS THE LORD’S.”

HAVING considered the cases of Abram and Jacob, we come next to consider that of the Jewish tithe. Its institution by God is not disputed; the only inquiry here can be, Was this *his first* institution of it? If we have consented to the preceding argument, we shall have come to the conclusion that it was not. But here I would premise, that I do not rest the case solely upon the concession of this point. If it be allowed, then indeed my argument must be admitted, that a tenth is that proportion which a Christian should give to God. But if it be disallowed,—if it be supposed that the first divine appointment of a tenth dates no higher than the time of Moses, even on this lower ground I am of opinion that the matter may satisfactorily be established.

I do not, however, view the matter in this light at all. Agreeably to the whole tenor of our past reflections, I regard the Mosaic institution of a tenth as but the continuance of God’s ancient claim with a new applica-

tion of it for the purposes of the Mosaic ritual. I regard it, not as a new ordinance, but the republication and assertion of an old one. For the proof of this I rely, of course, on what has been advanced in the previous chapters, and if the arguments there have been sound, the matter is placed beyond dispute. But I will, nevertheless, proceed to show, that every fair inference drawn from the mention of the subject in the law of Moses is in full conformity with the conclusion that has been already come to. In our inquiry I will not encumber the question by a reference to any of the Jewish offerings or sacrifices except that tenth which was claimed by God as his portion, and by him appropriated to the maintenance of the Levites and the service of the sanctuary.

And, first, I am glad to strengthen my position by the authority of a great reasoner, and one who has done good service in the defence of the vital doctrines of the Christian faith,—I mean the late Archbishop Magee. In his great work on the Atonement, he uses an argument in support of the divine origin of sacrifices which applies in its full force, with merely a change of some of the names, to the establishment of the divine origin of a tenth : speaking of sacri-

fices he says, "That the institution was of divine ordinance may, in the first instance, be reasonably inferred from the strong and sensible attestation of the divine acceptance in the case of Abel, again in that of Noah, afterward withal of Abraham, and also by the systematic establishment of them by the same divine authority in the dispensation of Moses." For the names here mentioned, if we will use those of Abram and Jacob, Magee's argument stands in its entire force for our conclusion. That Abram's offering of a tenth was accepted by God we know from his having received the blessing of Melchizedek. That Jacob's vow of a tenth was equally so, we know from the abundant blessing which God bestowed upon him; to use his own simple, expressive words in his prayer to God before his meeting with Esau, "With his staff he passed over Jordan, and now he was become two bands." While the appointment of a tenth stands on the same footing in the Mosaic law with that of sacrifice, namely, a divine command; if the argument holds good for sacrifice, it certainly holds good for tithes also.

Again; it is much more consistent with the Scriptural character of God to suppose that in this ordinance he continued a rule

previously enjoined by himself, than that he adopted a scale which had first recommended itself to the uninspired judgment of man. The whole spirit of Scripture leads us to conclude that the true God borrows nothing from man. He is the teacher, never the taught. The very minutest ceremonies of the law were dictated by him. The most trivial portions of the Tabernacle were commanded to be made after his pattern. The customs of the surrounding nations in their religious worship, however innocent some of these were in themselves, were forbidden to his people. Much less may we suppose that so important a part of the law as its tenth was borrowed by him from man. Nor will it answer here to say that those from whose example this may be supposed to have been taken were faithful men, unlike those idolatrous nations whom Israel was forbid to imitate. What is the wisdom of Abram or of Jacob in his sight "who chargeth his angels with folly?" It is, then, more reasonable to conclude from the Scriptural character of God that his ordinance of a tenth in the Mosaic law was a continued assertion of his own commandment, than that it was copied from the example either of Jacob or of Abram.

Again; this is more consonant with the nature of the law itself, which in all of it that is of a moral nature, and in much that is of a ceremonial, was but the republication of an older commandment. Imprinted at first on the unfallen mind, the moral law was never quite obliterated even from fallen nature, as St. Paul declares in the second chapter of Romans; it was revealed, in parts at least, from time to time, until the more full declaration of it by Moses, and has only had its full spiritual meaning brought out, and its deep obligation enforced, by the Christian dispensation. Now we claim for the giving of a tenth to God all the authority of moral obligation. It is from its nature wholly shut out from the domain of mere ceremonies and traditions, which may be of force in one dispensation and abrogated in another. The gift of *some* portion to him none can deny to have this force, always, in all places, at all times; and it only remains for God to name his proportion in order to give to that peculiar portion the force of a moral precept. We will again use the analogous instance of the Sabbath-day to illustrate our argument. To devote a portion of our time to the special service of him to whom all our days are due is a moral obligation; but God having speci-

fied a seventh as the particular portion he claims, makes our observance of a seventh, rather than of any other portion, to be the point in which our obligation lies. The gift of a tenth, then, being morally obligatory, forming an important part of the moral law binding on the Jewish conscience, being no mean part of that worship due by them to Jehovah, and partaking in no degree of the nature of that code of ritual from which Christ has set us free, it is only agreeable with all we are told of the moral law to suppose that this, as every other part of it, came not first into force when it fell from the lips of Moses, but had its previous sanction of the divine commandment, and its previous claim to man's obedience.

Again; we have reason to conclude, that in the extent of moral obedience the Israelites were not subjected to a stricter law than the Church of God in preceding times. In one point we know that, from the hardness of their hearts, their departure from the purer and stricter law of earlier days was, we do not say approved of, but suffered to take place; we allude to the subject of divorce. We may, then, reasonably conclude that in other respects no stricter law of morals was imposed upon them, which

would be the case if the Jewish proportion were a tenth, while believers of previous times could discharge their obligation by the gift of what portion they pleased—a twentieth it might be, or less.

Once more; we rely on the manner in which tithes are spoken of in the law of Moses as establishing the fact that they were not then for the first time made the peculiar property of God. Particular attention is due to this. The twenty-seventh chapter of Leviticus and thirtieth verse is the first place in the law where a tenth is spoken of. Let us mark the way in which it is spoken of: "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, *is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.*" The use of the present tense forbids us to suppose that now first was a tenth made the property of God; it obliges us to allow that it *was already his*. Even if he had said of it, as in fact he does in verse thirty-two, "*It shall be holy* to the Lord," this would not prove it to be then first ordained, for it might properly signify the continued appointment of a previous law, as we know to be the case with the ten commandments, which run in the future tense; but where he says of it, "*It is holy*" to him, this cannot signify any other thing than that

what was spoken of was already established when the words were uttered. We need not fear relying on the plain grammatical sense of Scripture. It was written under the inspiration of that Spirit who would not allow error to be conveyed by its language. But if we turn our attention to the same expression in the case of other ordinances, we will be confirmed in our view of the sense we have taken of it when applied to a tenth. Another such expression precisely occurs in this chapter about the firstlings of beasts; and it is to be remarked that, with the exception of this and that of the tenth, every other ordinance in the chapter is in the future tense. The twenty-sixth verse reads thus: "Only the firstling of the beasts, which should be the Lord's firstling, no man shall sanctify it: whether it be ox or sheep: *it is the Lord's.*" Moses here speaks of a law already established on the departure of Israel from Egypt, and with this agrees the expression, "*It is the Lord's.*" Poole's comment on this verse is short and striking. He says, that the Israelite "is forbid to vow his firstling because it is not his own, but the Lord's already, and therefore to vow such a thing to God is a tacit derogation from, and a usurpation of the Lord's right, and a mocking of God by

pretending to give him what we cannot withhold from him." We should have expected to find him in his comment on verse thirty saying of the tenth what he has, when explaining verse twenty-six, said so well of the firstling; but we have no hesitation in asserting that the same expression is adopted in verse thirty of the tithe, because it was then no new ordinance, but God's old and long-established claim. Let us take another similar example in the case of the Sabbath-day, ordained to be observed at the creation. The first mention of the Sabbath in the law is in Exodus xvi, 23: "And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, *To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath* unto the Lord." Whatever Moses may refer to in his expression, "The Lord hath said," whether to his ordinance of the Sabbath in the second chapter of Genesis, or to a subsequent ordinance of that day, there is no doubt that the expression, "To-morrow is the rest of the Sabbath," means that it was an ordinance already established, not one now first introduced. Thus confirmed in the view taken of Leviticus xxvii, 30, we need not hesitate in concluding that it supports all the preceding arguments on the subject of the tenth, establishing the fact,

that it was not first introduced as a divine appointment in the Mosaic dispensation, but was continued in that dispensation from a preceding age.

We have thus far then proceeded in our argument, and will not, I apprehend, find much difficulty in the application of it to the Christian's obligations. We have seen that the ordinance of a tenth was originally the command of God to the world at large, and as such its traces have been met with in remote and unconnected lands. As in the late anxious searches for the gallant band lost amid Arctic snows, the discovery of somewhat that had belonged to them, or some other memorial, led the searchers to conclude, "Here Franklin passed, or here he spent the weary polar winter;" so the traces of a tenth amid the superstitions and idolatries of many lands led us to acknowledge the existence of a divine law which traversed the world, and, piloted by heavenly skill, never wholly suffered shipwreck. We have seen even ungodly Cain recognizing God's claim to a portion of his substance, though his gift was not accepted, being offered not in faith, but in a self-righteous spirit; as in later times God disdained the offerings of those who rejected his only Son.

We have seen Abram, the friend of God, paying to God's priest as his right the tenth of all his spoils, and Jacob vowing to the bountiful Giver of blessing the same portion of all his substance. And, finally, we have seen God himself, in the Mosaic dispensation, by his ordinance of a tenth marking by unmistakable sign this law as having come from himself; acknowledging it there, not as the mere chance product of human gratitude seeking thus to express its deep obligations, but as his own command first issued to the world at large, to keep alive and perpetuate in the minds of those who would fain be independent, his claim to universal sovereignty.

Before leaving this chapter, there is one inference that I wish to draw. We saw, in the instance in Abram's life, that God's tenth was all of it given to Melchizedek; in Jacob's case we concluded, that none of it was devoted to the maintenance of a priesthood; while, in the present chapter, we see that its principal object was for the support of the ministry of Levi, including the Jewish priesthood. What I would infer, then, is this, that while the tenth is at all times due, and to be paid to God, the way in which he wishes it to be used is not always the same,

but varies according to the dispensation and his appointment. It may all of it go to support a ministry, or none of it may be spent that way, or a portion of it may suffice. All depends on the expression of his will to whom it belongs.

We have hitherto strictly confined our attention to the subject of the tenth, and have prepared the way for the consideration of it as it affects us of the Christian dispensation. We cannot, however, come immediately to this point. Our Scriptural inquiries will, I think, lead us to the conclusion, that while a tenth is God's general claim on man, on some he makes a further claim. From most it may be a tenth is all that he expects, but there would appear to be others from whom he looks for a far more bountiful gift. We propose, then, in reference to these latter to consider the subject of the Jewish free-will offerings.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I HAVE SEEN WITH JOY THY PEOPLE TO
OFFER WILLINGLY UNTO THEE."

A TITHE was the general law for Israel ; but Jewish liberality was by no means confined within that limit. It was neither intended to be so by Him, who being himself all bountiful, loveth also a cheerful giver ; nor was it so accepted by those to whom was given along with abundance the free spirit which loves to communicate. In God's ancient Church were those who disdained to set a limit to their bounty where the cause of Jehovah was concerned ; but only thought themselves too highly honored in bestowing their wealth on him. How delightful to look back upon those glorious pages of Jewish history, when this free spirit animated the nation as one man ; when all, both high and low, from the prince and noble to the humblest Israelite, vied in pouring their gifts into the treasury of God. The precious metals dug from the bowels of the earth, the costly stones gathered from the ocean and the mine, rich furs,

fine linen, costly woods, and spices, all were offered willingly in the sacred cause. Those who had none of these, but to whom God had given wisdom to devise or hands to execute, devoted freely the inventions of genius, the skill of art, and the strength of labor, in executing the work of God. No selfish thought seems to have come across their minds, no covetous reflections to have checked the free current of their bounty. They only reflected that it was for God they did it, and with that view no gift appeared too valuable or great. How sad the contrast with other periods when covetousness and selfishness took the place of bounty and of gratitude; when not merely free-will offerings were grudged, but the appointed tenth was withdrawn. Not more striking was the contrast between the condition of Israel at these differing times. In the one the windows of heaven were opened, and plenty poured out from her free horn, while gladness dwelt within the heart, and joy beamed on the countenances, of a happy people; in the other God in displeasure dried up the fountain whence the streams of refreshing had flowed in their various channels, and gloom overshadowed the face, and repining saddened the spirits, of the selfish nation;

for it was true which Solomon said, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."

The free-will offering differed from the tenth, not only in that it was not required from all the people, but that even where it was expected, discretion seems to have been allowed as to how much or how little should be given. To give a tenth was the bounden duty of every Israelite, but the free-will offering depended on the ability and willingness of the offerer. The one was required of all the people; the reluctant and the grudging were scarcely invited to join in the other. "Speak unto the children of Israel," said God in one place to Moses, "that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take *my offering*." Thus we see the discretion that was allowed in these offerings. That which man felt willing to give, God invited him to bestow; but where the willing spirit ceased, the offering was not pressed. It is still called, and really was as much, God's as was the tenth, and so we will see it a little further on allowed to be by his servants; but yet it was ordinarily left optional with the Israelite. To him was

said, as to his successor in this Christian dispensation, Let every man do as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity. With this discretionary power were, however, added the restrictions, that whatever was offered should be perfect in its kind and without blemish, and that what was once offered could not be withdrawn.

The Jewish free-will offering was, in some instances at least, of a permanent nature. Ordinarily a gift, greater or less as occasional circumstances required, it was sometimes regular in its payment and obligatory in its nature, because, though at first voluntarily undertaken, yet when undertaken it could not be withdrawn, in conformity with the precept of Deut. xxiii, 23. Of this kind was that annual tribute which the Jews on their return from Babylon bound themselves to pay to God for the service of his house. In the course of time it amounted to an immense treasure, contributed not only by those Jews inhabiting Palestine, but also by those scattered throughout Gentile cities, and exciting by its vastness the cupidity and rapacity of Mithridates, of Pompey, and of Crassus. (Hooker's Eccl. Pol., l. xiv, c. 7.) "Let no one wonder," says Josephus, (Ant., l. xiv, c. 7,) "that there was so much wealth

in our temple, since all the Jews throughout the habitable earth, and those that worshipped God, (that is, proselytes,) nay, even those of Europe and Asia, sent their contributions to it, and this from very ancient times.

But, generally speaking, their free-will offerings were made on extraordinary occasions. The principal ones of these that we read of in Scripture were three in number, and all of them for the purpose of raising a house to God. The first of these was the erection of the Tabernacle in the wilderness; the second, the preparation for the building of the Temple in the reign of David, and its actual building by Solomon; the third was on the return of the captive tribes from Babylon, when they proceeded to reërect on its former site the holy house, which had been laid waste for their sins. On each of these occasions the enthusiasm of the people in offering was very great; and vast as was the amount of costly and valuable things required, all was supplied, and more than supplied, by the zealous liberality of the offerers. When the Tabernacle was being made and furnished we are told that the people required, not to be urged to give, but to be restrained from giving. How extraordinary does it sound in these covetous

times the complaint of the overseers of the building, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make!" How strangely does it read, in these days of calculating selfishness, the command which Moses caused thereon to be proclaimed throughout the camp of Israel, "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary!" In the wealthy reigns of David and Solomon, the amount contributed almost exceeds calculation. While on the return of the captives, in poverty no doubt, from Babylon, the language of the inspired historian is brief but very significant, "They offered freely for the house of God," "They gave after their ability."

Such were the Jewish free-will offerings when extraordinary occasions called for their liberality. In the times of their piety to God his appeal was not made in vain. The treasures of the nation were expended in his cause with a zeal and a self-denial becoming the chosen people. O, had they been always thus, and in other respects as in this, then would Jerusalem have been, what she will one day be, "a praise upon earth." Perhaps some are ready to say, "These were

sad times in Judah when the people thus alienated from themselves and their families their most valuable substance." So might covetousness say, but so saith not the bountiful heart. To such the joy of giving is greater, deeper, purer, and more lasting, than the joy of receiving. Let us turn to one of those occasions before referred to, when David assembles the congregation of Israel, and declares what he has offered, and receives from them their offerings for the Temple which Solomon was to build. Among the many days of holy joy which rose upon the chosen people throughout their wonderful career, this was one of the brightest. It takes its place side by side with that glorious morning, when Israel, saved from the hands of the Egyptians, saw their enemies dead on the sea-shore; when Moses and the people sang their song of thanksgiving; when Miriam took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances, and their glad hymn was, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." It deserves to be remembered for its joy with that great Passover kept in the reign of Hezekiah, after a long interval of neglect

of that holy ordinance, when the pious king recalled to Israel's mind their ingratitude, and moved them to repentance; when, in their new-born zeal, they kept not only the seven days of the feast appointed by the law, but other seven also, "with exceeding gladness;" when there was great joy in Jerusalem, because since the days of Solomon there had been no such Passover; when the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up into his holy dwelling-place, even into heaven. It ranks with that day of rejoicing when the liberated captive took down the harp which he had hung upon the willows by the waters of Babylon—when, if he wept at the remembrance of Zion, it was with tears of joy at the prospect of soon again beholding her battlements and towers—when each said to the other, "Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob;" and there was heard again in Judah "the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Even such a day was that when David and the people offered, with joyful willingness, the best of their substance for the Temple of their Lord.

Nor did they think in doing so that they were doing any such work of supererogation

as made God their debtor. It remained for later times to set up this false and blasphemous claim of human merit. It remained for those, who assert for themselves exclusively the possession of the faith, but whom the word of truth describes as apostate from the faith, to put forward this arrogant pretension. In the seasons of deepest devotion to God, when all they had and all they were were laid at his feet, the feelings of the faithful Israelite, and his language, were ever the humblest. Then were their shortcomings most keenly remembered, while their performances of duty were felt to be God's due, and at the best imperfect. The praise which was continually in their mouths was the praise of God; and when this praise was at its highest note, the deep bass which accompanied it, and gave it volume, was that of humiliation and self-abasement. As David prayed that the "free-will offerings of his mouth might be accepted of the Lord," thereby confessing them unworthy of him whom they would celebrate, so he felt when offering his own and his people's offerings. He knew, after all, that the offerer was sinful, and his gift the property of God. "Who am I," said he, "and what is my people, that we shall be

able to offer so willingly after this sort; for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee?"

We reserve for a future chapter the discussion on the propriety on the part of some of free-will offerings over and above their tenth. With one single observation we will dismiss this present chapter. That which Solomon expended on the house of God brought a more pure and real joy to his heart, and more lasting honor to his name, than his subsequent vast expenditure on the splendor of his court and the magnificence of his harem.

CHAPTER IX.

"HONOR THE LORD WITH THY SUBSTANCE."

WE have now brought down our subject to that point when we are to apply it to ourselves. This is our serious inquiry, Have the foregoing arguments any reference to us or not? Are Christians under the same obligations to God in the expenditure of their substance, that we have seen his people to be under in the Jewish and preceding dispensations; or has Christianity, in relieving them from the burden of Jewish ceremonial, also left them at liberty to expend in the cause of God whatever portion of their substance they think fit themselves? Our position here is, that it has not; that God still expects from us the same proportion of our goods to be used in his glory which he received from his Church in former ages. This is what we shall endeavor to establish in the present chapter. It is evident that whatever reason there was for supposing that God would define plainly what portion of his substance he expected from man exists as much for Christians as for those of pre-

vious dispensations. The same covetousness, alas! that has ever reigned in the natural heart, and exerted its influence even in the heart renewed by grace, is equally powerful now, as it has been. The same selfishness which led those of former times to grudge God his portion of their substance, and to expend their all on their own aggrandizement, or the advancement of their families, would also lead the Christian to contract his acknowledgments to God within the narrowest compass, and part even his miserable mite with reluctance. Nay, it is of our dispensation in its latter periods that prophecy has given among its leading features, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous." If, then, we saw any probability that God would at any time define his claim, that probability still exists.

If a former part of our argument has been admitted,—namely, that the obligation of a tenth dates from times long anterior to Judaism, and was only continued, not commenced, in that system,—our conclusion that its obligation exists with Christians would very speedily be established. The argument was, that God imposed this obligation as a common and perpetual ordinance upon mankind. If, in the days of Noah, or, as is

much more probable, in those of Adam, the Almighty required from these heads of mankind that they should honor him, the Owner and Bestower of all, with a tenth of their substance ; and if in consequence among various nations, and especially among those who in the earliest days worshiped God with acceptable worship, not self-devised but received from him, the distinct traces of this original command have been seen, it cannot be doubted in that case that the obligation to keep this precept still exists in all its force for us. The reason is a plain one. The commands of God to men continue in force until they have been repealed by him. Now, this particular precept was never repealed by him. On the contrary, when a new dispensation (the Jewish), to answer peculiar circumstances, was instituted by him, he made this original command a part and parcel of its constitution ; he gave it a leading position in it ; down to the latest prophet he insisted on it as most obligatory on his people, while not one of the prophets ever spoke of it as a temporary institution ; by the mouth of his Son he continued still to assert his full claim to the observance of it ; and thus handed it over in all its force and all its freshness to the Christian dispensation. Not

one link is wanting in the chain of evidence which brings this precept from the days of its primitive appointment down to our own. Not a shadow of pretense exists for asserting, that if it had once been imposed by God, he had withdrawn its obligation, or suffered it to become obsolete from want of observance. In those days, when by Moses he published the original moral law of mankind,—wrote on tables of stone what had become defaced from the fleshly tables of the heart,—and in the permanent record of the Scriptures preserved it from being lost amid the ever-varying traditions of men, the obligation of the Israelite to pay a tenth to him was insisted on as plainly as any other obligation ; while, being brought into the law from preceding ages, there could be no pretense for saying, that with the passing away of the peculiarities of Judaism this, too, had ceased to be of obligation. If, therefore, we admit that God ordained this practice before the days of Moses, and that in obedience to this ordinance Jacob vowed his tenth to God, and Abram paid his tithe to Melchizedek, we cannot deny that the same obligation continues with us, preserved unbroken through Jewish to Christian times.

In my own mind I am satisfied with the

perfect validity of this argument, and would be content to close the matter here. But I am also persuaded, that even if the grounds of it should be disputed, our conclusion may yet be proved in another way. Should any one think, notwithstanding what has been advanced, that the divine origin of a tenth cannot be established as of an elder date than the Mosaic law, even on this lower ground I am prepared to argue for its continued obligation in the Christian Church. Let it, then, for the sake of argument, be allowed that in the Jewish dispensation we find its first distinct appointment by God. On this ground we will proceed in the remainder of the chapter to show its continued obligation upon us.

The Christian's estimation of the Old Testament Scriptures is not unfrequently very different from what it ought to be. It is too often supposed that they were only, or at least chiefly, intended for the Jewish dispensation, and that, when the Christian was introduced, they were, in great measure, to be laid aside, and the New Testament Scriptures were to take their place. They are imagined by some to be peculiar to the Jew, somewhat as the Koran is to the Moham-medans, and that the Christian finds his law

of life in the writings of the evangelists and apostles. Now such an idea is wholly erroneous. The faith of the Old Testament and the New is essentially one. The moral duties inculcated by both are essentially the same. The New Testament is but the fulfilment and comment on the Old, as the prophets enforce, illustrate, and expand the spiritual meaning of Moses's law. The difference between the two is but in development, not in sense. Now, this Old Testament is completely the book of the Jewish Church. Take away a portion of Genesis, and all the rest relates to Israel. Its call in Abraham, its bondage, its law, its Canaan, its sins, its punishment, its privileges, its promises,—these are the contents of the Old Testament Scriptures. And yet these latter, rightly understood, were a complete law of life and salvation to the faithful Israelite before Christ came,—to the faithful Christian after his coming. The pretense of Rome, that the Christian Church was for a considerable time left to oral tradition and teaching, is utterly false: she had in the Old Testament her perfect law. It was these that Christ commanded to be searched, as testifying of him. These were Stephen's "lively oracles," handed down from Moses as a precious tra-

dition to the Christian. It was after "the way" taught in them that Paul "worshipped the God of his fathers, believing all things that were written in the law and in the prophets." These were the "Holy Scriptures," which Timothy had known "from a child;" which were "able to make wise unto salvation;" which were "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" which could make the "man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." As the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, then, are essentially the same, so the Churches ruled by both are essentially one. "They are not two Churches," says C. Leslie, "but two states of the same Church; for it is the same Christian Church from the first promise of Christ (Gen. iii, 15) to the end of the world; and therefore it is said (Heb. iv, 2) that the gospel was preached unto them as well as unto us." And so Isaiah declares, that the change from Jewish to Christian times would be but God's "calling his servants by another name." Our Lord declares, that it was not the setting up of another fold, but the calling of the wandering nations into the existing fold: while Paul teaches the same important truth, when he declares that the baptism of

the Gentiles into the faith of Christ was but their grafting upon the ancient stock of Israel.

Now, our conclusion from these undoubted facts is this, that the precepts of the Old Testament are still as binding as ever, except in such particulars as, having been fulfilled by Christ and performed their temporary office, have been done away, according to the declaration of our Lord, that "not one jot or tittle should pass from the law till all were fulfilled." We do not say that all that is in the Old Testament is binding still; we know that it had its peculiarities, and that these are abrogated: but we assert, that with the exception of these,—exceptions on which we can lay our hands and tell which they are,—those ancient Scriptures are as much our law as are the writings of the apostles of Christ. Now it is quite evident that if they are, as no doubt they are, our law, we must be able to separate between what is binding and what is not binding in them. If on this point we are doubtful, if we know not which is obligatory, and which is not, their force as a law would be gone, for the "trumpet would give an uncertain sound." What is done away with we can only learn, either from those Scriptures themselves, or

from those of the New Testament, or from both. Whatever cannot be proved from these sources to be abrogated must be considered still in force. We will show, then, not only that no such abrogation exists in the matter of the tenth, but that, on the contrary, we have every fair and sufficient reason for concluding that its obligation is continued in the Christian dispensation; and if we do this, and at the same time remove certain objections that might seem at first sight opposed to our conclusion, we consider that we will have gained our point.

When the preachers of the gospel addressed themselves to the Jewish mind, they never insisted on their reception of any truth, or their laying aside any practice, which they could not establish to them out of their own Scriptures. In their "witness, both to small and great, they said none other things than what Moses and the prophets did say should come." The coming and circumstances of the Messiah,—the casting away of the Jews and calling in of the Gentiles,—the change of the priesthood,—the abrogation of sacrifices and of the ceremonial law in general,—all were reasoned with them out of the Old Testament; and it was only because they rejected Moses and the proph-

ets that they rejected Christ. To mention particular parts of the New Testament where this can be seen may appear superfluous, when traces of it are to be found throughout; but we may, before passing on, instance the third, fourth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Romans, the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of Galatians, and from the fifth to the tenth chapter inclusive of Hebrews, as remarkable examples. Now, neither in the New Testament—where, in all probability, every departure from Jewish practice has been noticed—nor in any part of the writings of the Old, has it ever been hinted, that in Christian times men were to cease to honor God with their substance as his servants of previous times had done. If such an intimation can be pointed out, we will at once confess ourselves mistaken; but since none such can be shown, it plainly follows that the obligation of Christians in this respect is continued in all its force.

Again, it is allowed that, while the civil and the ceremonial laws of Judaism do not bind Christians, its moral law is still as binding as ever. Now the giving of a tenth was certainly a part of the Jewish moral law, and therefore it is of force with Christians. That the giving of a tenth was a moral duty

to the Jews, is of easy proof. It had nothing typical or ceremonial about it. In all times, both previous and subsequent to Judaism, the giving of some portion of man's substance to God was esteemed a moral duty ; and when God, in the Jewish dispensation, if not before, named a tenth as his expected portion, then the gift of a tenth to him became of moral obligation. Thenceforward it could not be altered, except by the same authority that imposed it. A parallel instance readily occurs to us in the observance of the Sabbath, or seventh day. In Eden God ordained that the seventh portion of man's time should be dedicated to himself. If this specific portion had not been mentioned, its observance would have no stronger obligation than any other supposed proportion of our time. But no sooner had God fixed upon this proportion, than the observance of that, rather than of any other, became our moral duty, which no man might dare to alter—which no mere change of dispensation could set aside. The keeping of a seventh day has been a perpetual ordinance before the flood, in the patriarchal and Jewish age, and in the Christian Church. And so the gift of a tenth, made a moral duty to the Jew, con-

tinues a moral duty to his Christian successor, who has come in his place, and taken upon him his predecessor's privileges and obligations.

Every reason exists now, and exists even in greater force, for the giving of a tenth, which existed in Jewish times. God is still the sovereign Lord of all, and therefore to be honored by his creatures in those gifts he has bestowed upon them. Man is still the recipient of blessings, and bound to show in some sensible manner his gratitude and love. The interests of religion are to be upheld in a world, which would quickly, if left to itself, turn aside from, and forget and oppose the truth. The widow, the orphan, and the destitute, are still among us,—recommended to us by that same God who gave them in charge to his ancient people. In one most important respect the need of a tenth is more felt in the Christian than the Jewish Church. The latter was not missionary in its character,—its calling was merely to uphold the faith among the chosen people; while that of the Christian is to bear the name of Christ to every dark land of heathenism, and never to stay its labors till every child of the great common Father has been brought home “to the Shepherd

and Bishop of his soul." It, surely, is not to be thought of for a moment, that the time of God's displaying most fully his love to man is to be seized on by the latter as the time for diminishing the expression of his gratitude; or that the acknowledgments of God's sovereignty are to be less manifest when he has made us and ours doubly his own. If in that elder and less-privileged system men honored God with the tenth of their substance, can it be imagined that we, so much more favored, are to be behind them in our gratitude? For what the dim, cold light of breaking day, struggling with the mists of night, is to the glorious sun of noon, such is Judaism to Christianity. Bondage was the spirit of the former, adoption that of the latter dispensation. For in the one Christ was foreshadowed, in the other Christ was manifested; in the one men sought, in the other they found him.

As the grand reason—namely, the honoring God—still exists in all its force for the gift of a tenth, as well as the uses to which he would have it applied, so the New Testament everywhere requires of the believer a portion of his substance. This portion was to be greater or less, according as God had prospered each individual. True, a tenth is

not named in the New Testament ; but that was not required, because that proportion was already fixed in the Old. This is quite a sufficient reason, as has been shown in the opening of this chapter. Already laid down, there was no occasion for its repetition. From what we know of the liberality of the early Christians,—in some instances giving away their all, in others, “out of a deep poverty abounding in liberality, to their power, yea, and beyond their power, being willing of themselves,”—we should not expect that the proportion of a tenth would be urged upon them as a duty, when, in all probability, few of them were satisfied with that portion, but gave much more. This same silence has been observed in the New Testament on another most important point. In the institution of the sacrament of baptism, it would be hard to show from its pages that infants were to be partakers of it. Its ordinance by Christ has been quoted by the opponents of infant-baptism just as freely as it has been advanced by its defenders, and not without some show of reason. While the cases which occur in the history of the New Testament Church—in the Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere—of whole families being baptized, are not conclusive

on the subject, since it cannot be shown from any one of them that infants were among their number. The simple but satisfactory proof is to be found in the Old Testament. There God entered into covenant with the infant children of his people; and when he was establishing his new and better covenant with the Christian Church, he did not mention children, because he had already declared his will that such should be brought into covenant with him. He changed the matter and the form of the accompanying rite, and, therefore, he plainly said, "Go, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" but, intending no change in *the subjects* of the covenant, he speaks not particularly of them. Jewish fathers, the apostles and missionaries of the first Christian Churches, would have no hesitation on this point. They had circumcised, they would henceforth baptize, their children.

We will notice another instance which seems to establish the principle here laid down, that every portion of the Old Testament is binding, except that comparatively small portion which has been specially noticed as done away. By what do we Christians regulate the degrees within which mar-

riage is permitted? By the law of Moses contained in Leviticus? On all hands these are allowed to be in force. St. Paul, in one instance, refers plainly to their continued obligation, when with horror he mentions the sin committed by a member of the Corinthian Church in marrying his father's wife. Now this case, we contend, is far more difficult of proof than the obligation of the tenth. The prohibitions of marriages within certain degrees are found in the Levitical law, and in that alone. They partake more the character of a law enacted from motives of expediency than of a moral commandment. They certainly were not in force from the beginning, when marriages within the nearest degrees were permitted, and which seem to have been permitted down to times approaching the giving of the law, for we read of Abraham's marrying his sister by the father's side. They oblige for one reason, and one only, but that is quite sufficient,—they are found in the law of Moses, and have not since been repealed. We need not say that the gift of a portion of our substance to God stands on a higher footing, for, whether it were a tenth or not, it has been in force from the beginning. Can it, then, be supposed, that the giving of our tenth to

the Lord, which in its essence, if not in the mere circumstance of the exact proportion, was always a moral duty,—which has been commanded in the law, a command repeated throughout the whole series of the writers of the Old Testament to its latest prophet, without one hint of its being but of a temporary nature, should in the Christian Church have ceased to be obligatory? Let us select, for example, that proverb of Solomon, “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase.” Surely this is obligatory on us. If it be not, it would be hard to show what part of Proverbs, or, for that matter, what part of the Old Testament, is obligatory. But if it does oblige us, in order to understand it correctly, we must read it in the light of the Jewish law. What it meant in Solomon’s days it means substantially in ours. The inspiring Spirit had not, surely, two meanings for one set of words. Now, these words bring us of necessity to the Jewish tithe. They were spoken of that, and of nothing else. They had this definite meaning to the Jew; they have the same definite meaning to us. The “first-fruits,” of which the wise man speaks, were not only the first, but also “the best of the wine, and the oil, and the wheat,”

and of the various products of the land, which the Israelite offered to God, and were identical with that tenth which was God's proportion of his people's substance. What was then their duty, is ours also. We will not stop to notice such poor objections as that this precept cannot apply to us, since we cannot give the same natural productions as were supplied by the land of Canaan, or cannot pay in kind, having many of us no connection with land, &c. The essence of the precept is all we contend for. The Jew in foreign lands was in the same condition with us, and, if too distant from Jerusalem, could convert his offering into money.

But we have, besides, in the New Testament, express authority for concluding that this part of the ancient law, as well as that law in general, has still a binding power upon the Christian's conscience. If it be the case, that "whatever was written aforetime was written for our learning," and if it was written as a standing law for Israel that they were to give to God a tenth of their substance, it is, we think, hard indeed for us to draw any other lesson from this precept than that we are to honor him in like manner. But the apostle Paul leaves us in no doubt that this particular part of the law is

in force for Christians. In the ninth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians he appeals to it as a living and authoritative law,—as binding in its spirit upon the Corinthians as it ever was upon the Church of Israel. He applies the offerings of the Jews and their application of them to enforce similar duties among Christians. He does not, indeed, advert to the very point of the example on which we are now insisting, for that was not his object. He takes the part that suited his own case. He wanted to establish the right of the Christian ministry to a maintenance by their people, and his proof was the case of the Jewish priesthood; “they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar.” But that the whole system under the law was meant to impart its lesson under the gospel he intimates from his general assertion in the eighth verse, “Saith not the law so also?” It was as much the teaching of the law that the people should offer to God a tenth, as that the priests should obtain a portion of their offerings. It is, therefore, as incumbent on Christians to give a tenth to God as to support their ministers. The same law which teaches the one, teaches the other also.

And here it may be as well to apply our-

selves for a moment to the consideration of a point which the argument of the chapter has doubtless suggested ere this to the reader. If we argue from the institution of a tenth in the Mosaic law to the Christian's obligation to give the same proportion, must we not also insist that the Christian ministry has a divine right to this tenth, since that of Levi had? To some, this would be a consideration much in favor of our argument; to others, it would be a source of strong opposition to it. For ourselves, while we are clearly of opinion that its application by God to the support of the Levitical ministry establishes the full right of the Christian ministry to a maintenance in comfort and independence by their people out of their offerings to God, we do not see that it teaches the right of the latter *to the tenth*. Our reason is this. The Levites formed a twelfth part of the tribes of Israel; the Christian ministry has never amounted to anything like that proportion of their people. As the Jewish *priesthood* seem to have obtained but the tenth part of the tithe; so all that seems taught us in regard of the gospel ministry is that they should obtain an adequate provision for the maintenance in comfort and respectability of themselves and of their families.

We think that we have by this time established our object, which was to prove that God expects from us what he required from his people in other days,—a definite proportion of that increase with which he blesses them. But, before proceeding further, it will be proper to notice one or two objections to the argument of this chapter, which might seem at first possessed of some force. The first of these is, that since the priesthood of Levi has been done away, that tithe which was used for their support has also been done away. Now to this there are two distinct and sufficient answers. The first is, that the great object in the Jewish tithe was the honoring of God, and the great sin in refusing it was that in so doing God was defrauded. The ministry of Levi has, indeed, passed away; but that God, whose service Levi waited on, still requires the same acknowledgment from his creatures in their substance. The second answer is, that while the Jewish ministry and the temple-worship have departed, their place has been taken in our dispensation by the Christian ministry and worship, requiring to be upheld in Christian lands and to be propagated throughout the heathen world. Another objection might, perhaps, be made, from a hastily-considered

view of certain passages in the New Testament, which may seem to speak as if the Christian's offerings to God were left wholly to his own discretion. It may be said that such passages as this, "Every man, as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity," plainly signify a liberty permitted to the Christian in this respect, which is not consistent with the idea that a certain fixed portion of his means are expected from him by God. Now, if we have proved our point by other and sufficient reasons, such passages cannot have the least power to overthrow it. They are, in that case, in the New Testament, precisely parallel passages to others in the Old, which we have seen to appeal to the individual generosity of the Israelites, without their interfering in any measure with their obligation in the matter of the tenth. The passage above quoted can no more set aside the Christian's duty to give his tenth to God, than the following passage set aside the Jew's obligation to do so: "Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering." Both passages are, in fact, appeals to the free spirit of those who, having the means of being liberal

above that measure of a tenth laid down for common observance, think they can expend their abundance no way so well as in the cause of God. Such texts as that from 2 Cor. ix, 7, are, in fact, passages that will come under our consideration in the next chapter, when we treat of the Christian's free-will offerings.

We have now concluded our arguments on this important subject, and have, as we think, fully established that we are under the same obligations to God in the disposal of our means that his servants of old lay under. There must have been, we suppose, a peculiar propriety in the proportion of a tenth. Even if Abraham and Jacob gave it not in accordance with the divine command, which however we are quite satisfied they did, yet God in selecting their measure of liberality as that which was to regulate the liberality of Israel, stamped it with the impress of his approval as that which was from man a suitable acknowledgment of his sovereignty, a becoming expression of man's gratitude, and a somewhat adequate means of maintaining his worship in the world. Had we no other reason than that arising from this consideration, it would surely ill become fallible and erring man to attempt

to set up any other standard for his liberality than that which Infinite Wisdom had set before him, doubtless for his imitation. It had been our part to follow in a humble spirit the guidance of the Most High, satisfied that it was the best.

In taking leave of this part of our subject we do not feel ourselves bound, nor indeed would our space permit us, to enter upon the question as to whether there are not exceptions, and what they are, to this general obligation. That there may be such we do not deny, but neither do we suppose them to be more than may be supposed to have existed in the Jewish dispensation. The poor of the land doubtless were exempt: sudden and unexpected losses making it difficult, perhaps impossible, to meet our lawful engagements, in all probability excuse. But on this point we will not now enter any further. Man's excuses, let him ever remember, must be submitted to the scrutiny of Him whom they deprived of his required homage.

CHAPTER X.

“HE WHICH SOWETH BOUNTIFULLY SHALL REAP
ALSO BOUNTIFULLY.”

IN the Jewish dispensation we have seen that there were those of whom God expected more than the general tenth, and who gladly responded to his call. We believe both that the same claim is made now, and that the Christian Church has afforded as bright examples of devotion to God as can be met with in former times. It would be strange, indeed, if it were otherwise : strange if in the darker day and the less favored Church a greater return was either expected or made. It is not thus that God deals with man. The day of increased privilege is ever that of increased responsibility, and the season of bounty is also that of gratitude. As the rain and the sunshine are met by the earth's putting forth a fresher green, and arraying herself in fairer colors, so the dew of heavenly grace falls upon the believer's heart, and the quickening influence of the Spirit is imparted to him, that he may bring forth in his life the fruits of righteousness, and ex-

hibit in his conversation the beauty of holiness. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

In considering the free-will offerings of Israel, we saw that in some cases they became of a permanent nature, while the more remarkable and important of them were called forth on the occasions of building and furnishing the house of God. It was well said by the pious Nehemiah, when asked to leave his work on the second temple, that he "could not come down, for he was doing a great work." No doubt he was doing a great work in rebuilding, in the troubled times on which he fell, the house which Solomon had raised amid the quiet of a peaceful reign, and whose glory was to be greater than that of the former house when sanctified by the footsteps of its Lord. But incomparably more majestic and dearer to God is that temple which is rearing now, and on which Christians are called upon to expend their free-will offerings. The Jewish historian mentions with his nation's pride the vast stones which constituted the beauty and strength of the temple on Mount Sion; but each stone in the spiritual temple is an im-

mortal soul, which naught but the blood of Christ could purchase, which is in itself a temple for the Holy Ghost. Josephus describes the Jewish building as covered with plates of gold, reflecting back at break of day the fiery splendor of the sun, or appearing at a distance like a mountain covered with snow. To human eyes, indeed, in the spiritual temple there is no such glory, but to the eye of God it is beautiful and glorious, "having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor blemish;" but reflecting back the splendor of the incarnate Son, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The materials and workmen of Jerusalem's temple were brought together from various and distant places: the mountains of Judea afforded their quarries, Ophir its gold, Lebanon its cedars, Babylon its curtain vailing the holy place, Tyre its cunning worker in brass; but the materials and laborers of the Christian temple are collected from every clime. They come from lands bound by eternal frosts, or parched by a burning sun; the broad prairie, the deep valley amid Alpine mountains, the lonely isles of the Pacific, send their contributions; the huge cities of Europe,—its dark mines unblest by the light of day, its crowded factories and panting furnaces, supply their

portion of the building; the rich plains of India, even unchanging China and suspicious Japan, are represented there. The Jew estimated the greatness of his temple by the length of time it took to perfect it; but ours has been in progress of building since God laid its foundation-stone in the promise of Christ to our fallen parents. It is still unfinished after six thousand years; stone is being laid on stone, but the last is not yet placed. In the temple at Jerusalem David contemplated a house "exceeding magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all countries;" and such a house *was* built whose fame attracted the attention, and, when they saw it, the wonder of those who had seen Nineveh and Babylon, Athens, and Alexandria, and Rome in their glory. But what was its fame compared with that of the temple of which we speak? When its first stone was laid, Satan saw it with dismay, and spoke of it in the councils of the fiends, while angels took up the song of praise. It has advanced amid the strife of tongues and the din of contention, the mean man and the great taking part either for or against, but none neutral here. To overthrow its walls and dig up its foundations, fiendish malice has plotted, and the brutal violence of man

has toiled ; while, to raise still higher those walls, and to crown them with battlements and turrets, zealous men have labored, and enduring men have suffered, and angels have speeded on their errands : it is a “spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men ;” it is spoken of beyond the confines of earth, wherever spirits go ; its fame has spread even to the furthest stars. Such is the glorious spiritual temple which is ever in progress now ; which calls on those who would be fellow-helpers to the truth for their free-will offerings with far more powerful voice than did the Jewish house : for even a heathen could say of God, “His pleasure lies not in the magnificence of temples made with hands, but in the piety and devotion of consecrated hearts.”

If in the Christian dispensation there exists this great cause for the liberality of the affluent, do we not hear sounding in the believer’s ear now the same divine voice which came to Israel in the wilderness ? “Bring me an offering ; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.” Yes, we are persuaded that it is thus that we are to take those passages of the New Testament which leave to the discretion and liberality of each believer

the amount of his gifts to God. They clash not with that claim which God makes on us all alike for a definite portion of our substance, for surely in the New Testament it is not permitted to the believer, if he were so disposed, to close his purse against the claims of God's cause upon it, and to say, "My liberality is left absolutely to my own discretion; I will not surrender my liberty; I will give little, or nothing, if so I please." Against such ideas our text is decisive: "If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." We must then take such passages as 2 Cor. ix, 7, according to the analogy of Scripture; we must repudiate as wholly alien from their meaning that sense which selfishness and covetousness would put upon them, that the believer may, if he pleases, wholly refuse the aid of his means to further the cause of God, or may reduce his proportion to any amount, however small, that suits his narrow spirit. Such is altogether opposed to the spirit of the Christian dispensation, whose motto is, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Such passages are appeals, not to the meanness of the covetous mind, but to the liberality of hearts which

God hath touched with a sense of his own exceeding goodness and bounty, not merely in his gifts of temporal blessing, but more, infinitely more, in his spiritual blessings, the gift of eternal life in his dear Son our Lord, and the gift of the Holy Ghost to fit and prepare the Christian for his heavenly inheritance. It is to such that the exhortations of the New Testament are addressed, and they would never dream of taking advantage of the discretion left them, to narrow and curtail their bounty—to contract it within closer bounds than the minimum of Jewish acknowledgment, till it dwindled down to some mere trifle unworthy of them to offer or of God to accept. When salvation visited the house of Zaccheus, and this lost son of Abraham was found by, and had found Christ, straightway it was, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” When the “free Spirit” descended into the hearts, as well as dwelt upon the tongues, of the Christians at Jerusalem, in their love and joy “all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need.” It required but the announcement that famine was about to try those self-denying men,

to determine the distant Christians of Antioch to send them relief, "each man according to his ability." And when the same claim was laid before the Churches of Macedonia, he, who had himself given up all for Christ, bore them the record, that "to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves," not requiring the golden tongue of eloquence to draw from them some half-grudged and insufficient tribute, but themselves supplicating the apostle "with much entreaty that he would receive the gift." It was to such men that discretionary appeals were made, "Let each give as he is disposed in his heart," and it is in the light of their abounding liberality that we must interpret such appeals. They are, in fact, the invitations of the New Testament to the Christian for his free-will offerings, even as we saw the same addressed in the Old Testament to those who in the wilderness gave with glad spirit their best and richest possessions, or, settled in Canaan, rejoiced to imitate the bounty of the princely hearts of David and Solomon.

Is any one, then, still disposed to rely on such texts as authorizing him to give as little as he pleases in the cause of God? to him we would say, "It is not for you to interpret

them differently from those to whom they were first addressed. Understand them as they did, and you will understand them aright; but in that case most assuredly you will take from them no encouragement for a niggardly offering, or a covetous refusal. Or, if you will insist on the letter of the text, while you deny its spirit, we must then only refer you to the apostle who wrote *for you*; he will tell you of what kind your faith is; he will describe it by one fearful word; he will tell you it is 'dead.'"

While the great majority of mankind hardly earn their "bread in the sweat of the brow;" while a smaller number are happily placed in that mean which the wise man describes as life's most desirable and safest condition, there are others, and they in every wealthy country no inconsiderable number, who abound in the possessions of this world. They are those whom Scripture describes as "the rich;" whose besetting sins in some places it boldly denounces; whose deep responsibility it insists on in others; whose snares and temptations it delineates with the faithful and anxious tongue of love; whose great reward it delights to portray if they take heed to their trust. Such persons are in double danger, and Scripture does not

disguise their danger. They do not often hear the truth from those who surround them. While their wealth places every gratification, sinful as well as innocent, within their power, and the craving of a corrupt heart urges them to gratify every wish, they seldom meet with those who have sufficient love and boldness and purity of intention to warn, exhort, and entreat them. Indifference carelessly sees them hastening to eternal ruin; or insnaring fear ties the tongue that might otherwise have uttered the seasonable saving word,—or self-interest silences him who fears to make an enemy or alienate a patron by speaking the truth. O, that such would turn in their danger to that guide which neither fears, nor flatters, nor betrays,—to that word of life written by the hands of men, but bearing in its every word the impress of God's wisdom and love. There they would see their peril, and there the way of safety.

It is to such that special appeals are made in Scripture for special liberality, as one of the obligations consequent on riches, and one great means of escaping their dangers. What is enough from others, is not enough from them. When comfort, elegance, even grandeur, have been secured, there is yet an

overplus, with many a large one. Now after a certain sum little can be spent *lawfully on ourselves*. It is related of the late Louis Philippe of France, the richest man in Europe, that of all his vast private income, he expended on himself not more than four hundred pounds a-year; the remainder was spent on other things,—the encouragement of the fine arts, the advancement of science, the promotion of industry, the improvement of agriculture and commerce. Now there are with us numbers of individuals, not possessed, it is true, of equal wealth, but yet possessed of wealth over and beyond their own personal wants. On what is this overplus to be expended? We speak not of unlawful gratifications; on them the Christian may not expend, at the peril of his salvation, any the smallest portion of what belongs all of it to God. The lusts of the body, the covetous desires of the mind, cannot justify the expenditure of the least of God's goods; and fearful will be the account which he must render to his Judge, who shall be compelled to own that in his stewardship he expended his Master's money in oppressing the poor, or defrauding his creditor of his right, in gluttony or drunkenness, at the gaming-table, or in the degrading pursuits

of impurity and lewdness. We speak not at all of such a use of riches, nor do we pretend to condemn the application of them to the useful or the elegant arts and industries of life. We do not see why, according to his taste, the wealthy man may not have his gallery of paintings and sculpture, or his splendid conservatory, or his noble mansion, or his tasteful pleasure-grounds. These are all lawful in their way, and the expenditure upon them supports the industrious classes of the community. But what we do insist upon is this, that amid the plans and speculations of the wealthy, the honor and cause of Him who bestowed all this wealth should not be forgotten, or rather should surely occupy a prominent place. To what can wealth be so worthily devoted as to the glory of its great Owner? Nor can we see how in any other way the heart of the rich man can be preserved from the insnaring power of Mammon than by spending it freely in the service of God. So thought one, who had wealth in his power, but gave it up for Christ: "Charge them who are rich in this world," he wrote to Timothy, as an essential part of his duty, "that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; that they do good,

that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." Here was the apostle's safeguard against the snares of wealth,—a recollection of its uncertainty, and of God's eternal life, together with a free expenditure of it in every way that the cause of God requires. How many those ways are we will see in a succeeding chapter.

In the expenditure of the wealthy we claim a place—the *leading place*, for God. Amid the expense of equipage, and servants, and horses,—amid the decoration of houses, and the arrangement of landscape and garden,—amid the encouragement of those arts which embellish life, or expand a nation's industry and wealth,—O, let that greatest of all causes be first in your mind—the cause of God and of eternal life. To relieve even the temporal wants of struggling industry; to cheer the home of the widow and the orphan; to remove the spiritual darkness of a benighted district; to be the humble but most honored means of adding even one living stone to the glorious temple of the living God—these are more useful, greater, and more enduring works than to erect a Crystal Palace for the admiration of the world, to cast across an arm of the sea a great highway of communication, or to send beneath the broad

ocean with the swiftness of thought the interchange of the messages of the nations. These works, no doubt, are wonderful,—suggestive of the greatness of man, who conceived and executed them,—suggestive of the infinite greatness of Him whose creature man is. But they may disappoint the hopes which attended their formation, and are, after all, to perish; some, perhaps, like the dream of the night; all, however lasting, when “the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” The telegraph may oftener communicate the tidings of wrong and of disaster than of right and prosperity; may oftener convey the tones of anger or the message of defiance than those of peace and of good-will among men; and the glittering fabric, which in the bright anticipations of many was to usher in the brotherhood of nations, may only have been the harbinger of war and desolation. But the least work done for the love of Christ, and in the mind of a disciple, is never lost—it survives the wreck of nations and the ruin of the world: it follows the believer to his place of glory—it is never forgotten by Him who treasures up the actions of his saints.

And He does so precisely in the degree that they feel themselves undeserving of his

goodness. With the bountiful Christian there is as little notion of merit in his works as we saw to exist in the mind of the bountiful Israelite. There is, in fact, no such word in his lips. He gladly turns from his merits, since God does not mention them ; for what are they ? Not the merit of eternal life—that he knows to be the gift of God in Christ ; his merits are, separation from God, exclusion from heaven, the society of the lost. He knows of no other that belongs to him.

CHAPTER XI.

“THE FIELD IS THE WORLD.”

WE have thus considered the main subject of our essay, What is the proportion of his means which the Christian should give to God? We will not, however, take our leave of it without some further reflections. The inquiry soon suggests itself to the mind in immediate connection with our conclusion, If we are thus to give to God of our substance, in what manner does he expect us to bestow it? The answer opens a wide field, indeed, for reflection; but one over which we must now pass very swiftly. The briefest consideration of it will show us how many are the objects which call on us with loud voice for assistance, and attention to which redounds not only to the glory of God, but also to the best interests of man, even in this present life. In what manner the offerings of the ante-Mosaic times were expended we cannot certainly know, further than that a portion of them at least were used in sacrifices to God, in hospitality to the stranger, and relief of the poor. Their use in

Jewish times is pointed out by God himself in the law; while the New Testament, also, is explicit in informing us of the manner in which he requires his portion of the Christian's substance to be used. Various, indeed, are the objects which he lays before his people, and intrusts to their care and liberality. The Christian dispensation is intended for the world at large; the field of the Christian's sympathy and aid is coëxtensive.

One brief reflection will not be out of place before we consider the subject of the present chapter. If we will but remember what is literally the fact, that, in bestowing his assistance on its various objects, the Christian is only giving what belongs, not to himself, but to God, it will be apparent with how much greater authority he may be appealed to, and what far greater power such appeals will be likely to have. It is too frequently the case that in the bestowal of his means in the service of God, the notion of duty or obligation is often as little felt as it is in mere secular matters; and so it happens that what may be given to a cause eloquently pleaded is denied to the same cause when feebly put before us. Let the believer but reflect that in reality he has no right to withhold his assistance, that he is only al-

lowed the discretion of selecting such objects as appear to him most to require aid, but that what he is asked for is not really his but God's, and he will see the propriety of altering his conduct, and to look less to the manner of advocacy, and more to the cause which is advocated.

In the expenditure of the Christian's offerings, the support of the gospel ministry among ourselves occupies the leading place. They who are God's ambassadors to convey his message to man are his first objects in the distribution of the portion which he claims for himself. It is their right, which cannot be withheld from them without guilt. "They who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," by the same divine ordinance that gave to the Jewish priesthood a share of the altar sacrifices. They who have separated themselves from secular business to devote themselves to the service of their Redeemer, and the salvation of his wandering sheep, should not have their thoughts distracted from their calling by poverty and want at home. "Let it not be thought," says Mr. James, speaking on this subject, "that what is given to a minister is a charitable donation; it is the payment of a just debt. It is what Christ claims for his faith-

ful servants, and which cannot be withheld without robbery. I spurn for myself and my brethren the degrading apprehension that we are supported by charity. We are not clerical pensioners upon mere bounty. Our appeal is to justice, and if our claims are denied upon this ground, we refuse to plead before any other tribunal, and refer the matter to the great assize." We know of no money so well spent as this, in whatever view regarded. It is the most direct homage to God, being given to his servants. It maintains the preaching of those grand truths which are for the salvation of immortal souls. Even on the grounds of worldly expediency, it is more for the temporal interests of nations than any other expenditure. "Ye are the salt of the earth," said Christ to his apostles; and well and truly has Hooker called every ambassador of his "a pillar of that commonwealth wherein he faithfully serveth God." Take away from a nation its gospel ministrations; silence the message of peace, and the word of exhortation, rebuke, and warning, and you will quickly reduce it to that utter degeneracy of mind and morals which is the certain precursor of decay and ruin. It is righteousness which is the great exalter of one nation above another; and

true religion more, far more than any other thing, produces those principles of morality, of activity, of prudence and industry, of temperance and endurance, which make a people great at home, and respected and powerful abroad. What has preserved wealthy England from falling into that effeminacy of manners, that luxury and vicious indulgence, which extinguished the spirit of Greece and Rome, and paved the way for their downfall? Without hesitation we say it is her possession,—too partial, alas!—of true religion. What the Latin poet said to imperial Rome may with much greater truth be said of Britain: “Thou bearest rule, because thou submittest thy will to heaven.” To the possession of the truth and to its influence we refer, under God, the greatness of our country, and while she retains them we will not fear her overthrow.

The education of the young of our land, not merely in secular learning, but far more in instruction taken from God’s holy word, is another leading object which God has placed before us. No wise man will esteem as of little importance the education of youth for their calling in this present world; but most assuredly, too, there is no man of real

wisdom who will not hold it of infinitely greater moment to train the soul for heaven. If it be the mark of a contracted and mistaken mind to despise and neglect man's education for his position in this life, it is the mark of a mind immeasurably more narrow and mistaken to neglect the moral training and the religious knowledge without which man cannot be fitted for his heavenly inheritance. And therefore it is that the infallible guide-book of the Christian is so explicit and so earnest, "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." The Scriptural school, then, in which the poor of our land and of our people may learn of their Saviour, and be taught to aspire from the midst of their poverty and lowliness to a place in his kingdom, is a fit object of our sympathy and assistance.

The propagation of the religion of the Saviour throughout the world, by the circulation of Holy Scripture, a sound religious literature, and missionary exertion, is another grand object, which God has commended to our care. "Preach the gospel to every creature" is the divine command: "be fellow-helpers" to those who "go forth for Christ's sake" is the duty of all Christians, according to St. John. This subject

naturally divides itself into efforts to evangelize the heathen, to turn the heart of Israel to that Lord and Messiah whom they have denied, and to reclaim from the superstitions and idolatries into which it has fallen a large portion of the professing Christian Church. We need not dwell on our duty of evangelizing heathen lands. No Christian can for a moment doubt his duty on this head, or its urgent need to those who, "being without God, are also without hope in the world." Over how large a portion of mankind the shadow of heathen darkness still rests, it is fearful to contemplate. As little doubt can there be of our duty to proclaim in the Jewish ear the gospel of our Saviour. It is true they have, and hold with wonderful tenacity, their ancient law, and that in that law the gospel is preached. But, alas! the vail is on their hearts when they read the law, and they do not see that Christ crucified, as well as glorious, is its hope and its fulfilment. They come, then, under the class of those who having not the gospel require its proclamation; and sure we are that right dear in the sight of the Lord is their work who seek to bring to Jesus the people that once were, and will again be, "the apple of his eye."

Nor can it be doubted that it is the believer's duty to reclaim from error fallen Churches. Prominent among these is that gigantic Church of Papal Rome, which has extended her sway, and spread her corruption, over the earth. To her as their proper object point all those various marks which inspiration has given us, that we may know, guard against, and shun the grand apostasy from the faith. And though some sound and earnest upholders of the truth may doubt if Rome be indeed *the* predicted apostasy, none of them doubt that she has in many most vital points departed from the faith, and is "a blind leader of the blind." Now departure from vital truth, and choice of falsehood instead, is laid down in the Scriptures as fatal to salvation. Heresies are classed with the other works of the flesh, as, when persevered in, excluding from eternal life. The warnings of Christ's faithful apostles, and of the great Shepherd himself, against unfaithful teachers within the fold, are more solemn, and their denunciations of the terrible guilt of such persons are even more severe, than against the infidelity of the avowed unbeliever. Nor is there in the whole Scripture a more encouraging promise held out than to those who are the

honored instruments of restoring such :
 “ Brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

Hundreds, and even millions, are to be reached by evangelical truth, by whom the *voice* of instruction will not be heard. To these the pious tract or beautiful spirit-stirring volume must be sent. What charity is nobler than that which bears to the destitute, the suffering, and the lost, in a style at once simple and attractive, the instruction to enlighten the mind, the appeals to alarm and arouse the slumbering conscience, and the encouragement which presses the aching heart affectionately to the warm and sympathizing bosom of the Redeemer?

The suffering poor of every communion and opinion, and more especially those “ of the household of faith,” are another object, which we cannot neglect to consider in our distribution of what is God’s. We do not speak in support of an indiscriminate system of almsgiving to every miserable-looking object that claims it, which is as much opposed to the teaching of Scripture as to the maxims of a sound political economy.

Whatever tends to encourage a system of idleness, and to lead men to prefer a life of mendicancy to that of honest and laborious industry, certainly finds no countenance from that book which has commanded us to labor on six days of the week, and has ordained that "if any would not work, neither should he eat." Indiscriminate almsgiving, therefore, or the support in a lazy idleness of those who can but will not labor, is no part of a Christian's duty. But still there are always cases, even in countries where the fullest state provision is made for the relief of poverty, which call upon the merciful for their aid, and which the merciful God requires us not to disregard. They may be known by the judicious and inquiring; by those who will take a little trouble to discriminate between real and fictitious distress,—between the difficulties of struggling industry and sinful sloth. There are, in fact, few of that class who come under the title of the poor, who at some period or other of their lives are not in circumstances which justly entitle them to the sympathy of their more fortunate brethren. Want of employment or a season of sickness will sometimes deprive the most industrious and deserving of a sufficiency for their support.

It is at such times particularly that the hand of kindness should be stretched out to their assistance. A generous and sympathizing conduct on the part of the upper toward the lower orders, as it is in accordance with God's will, so it is the best preservative of society against the leveling doctrines of spoliation so prevalent in the present day. It is the gorgeous luxury and selfish carelessness of the poor, by those above them, that far more than anything else produce that envy and hatred which pave the way for the introduction into their minds of anti-social principles, which in times of trial issue in the overthrow of government and order. A little love, and kindness, and sympathy, if generally displayed by the independent toward their humbler brethren, would be far more effectual for the preservation of property and society than stringent laws and armed millions.

Such are the objects which God has in his word placed before Christians for their support. On the upholding of these he expects them to bestow that portion of their income which is especially claimed by him. And we thus perceive that the tenth, which belongs to God, is not too much for the purposes for which it is designed; that if it be

on our part due to him as an acknowledgment of his bounty and sovereignty, so he has marked out an ample and most worthy field for its employment. And so long as any of these objects require our aid, so long can no Christian plead the smallest excuse for withholding from the Lord his right. Until struggling industry ceases to advance its claim, and age and sickness supplicate not for relief; until ample instruction has been provided for the youth of our land, and each ministering servant and ambassador of Christ can say that he who supplies the spiritual wants of his flock has had his own temporal wants fully answered; until in casting our eyes over the wide world we can see no dark spot to which the glorious gospel has not been sent: until this has been done, and done well, no Christian can pretend to say that he may withdraw his share from the treasury of God. Which of these great objects is properly or fully supported? The answer, alas! must be, "None." When has any one of them met its becoming assistance? We must reply, "Never." No man, therefore, can say with truth that he knows not on what to expend that portion which God claims for himself.

If such are the general calls on all Chris-

tians, we will also find abundant to require the free-will offerings of the wealthy. Who that is disposed in his heart out of an overflowing abundance to give abundantly, but will with little pains find some befitting object on which to God's glory he may expend a portion of his riches? He will fix his eyes but too readily on some neglected district of his own land, perhaps in his own immediate neighborhood, which, though situate in a so-called Christian country, is almost as destitute of gospel privileges as if it lay within a heathen land. What more suitable, then, for a wealthy individual, or a number of such united, than to devote their care to this benighted spot? At their cost let a house of God arise in the midst of it, elegant in structure, while devoid of meretricious ornament, whose open doors may invite to prayer and to praise. Let some faithful minister of Christ be chosen to conduct its ministrations; by a holy life and a pastoral care to attract the careless and the godless; to win to and keep for the great Bishop of souls his wandering sheep. Let an endowment provide, so far as man can provide for futurity, that the gospel sound shall never be silent within those walls; that when its pious builders have mingled with

the dust, and the lips that first within them testified of Christ are hushed in the grave, the same "faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation," may yet be heard, and "the people that come after" may learn to praise the Lord. It was no mean recommendation of the centurion to Christ the report of the Jews, "He hath built us a synagogue." And surely the pious action of the Christian, who in honor of his Lord raises a house to his name, and provides for it a gospel ministration is a most suitable object for his free-will offering, and will bring down in the goodness of God a blessing upon him and his.

Or with equal propriety may the man of wealth devote a portion of it to the erection of a school-house, and provision for the instruction of youth, where such has not been adequately provided. Second in importance to none is such a work. It is the just observation of the poet Wordsworth, "The child is father of the man," which is but another form of what Solomon said long before, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." For what we sow we must expect to reap. From an ignorant youth we must look for a population a prey to the vile pur-

poses of the designing and the crafty ; from such as have only received a secular learning we may expect a population armed with power for evil, and in the pride of unsanctified intellect inclined to infidelity. From those alone whose education has been based upon divine truth may we hope for a people the pride and strength of their country. Such, to an extent probably unequaled elsewhere, were, and we trust in a great measure still are, the youth and manhood of Scotland.

Many, besides, are the ways in which the substance of the rich may be expended to the glory of God. In the erection of a hospital for the sick, or an almshouse for the aged and infirm, who have perhaps seen better days, and been reduced through no fault of theirs ; in the provision for the orphan, whom death may have thrown helpless on the world : in such ways as these riches cease to be "the unrighteousness mammon." Or wealth may cast a generous eye upon some man of genius, whose soaring intellect is cramped by that old complaint of mental power, domestic poverty. Brought out of want, this man may apply his mighty mind on labors which shall enrich unborn generations. To the liberality of Robert Boyle we principally owe the publication of

“Saunderson’s Book on Conscience,” and “Burnet’s History of the Reformation.” To the discriminating kindness of Bishop Jewel we owe it that Richard Hooker was not a tradesman. To similar conduct we owe the bringing forward of many of our greatest men and their immortal works.

Such are some of those objects which indeed commend themselves to the attention of those to whom God has given riches. These are works worthy of men and of Christians. These are works which give glory to God, and procure an enduring fame. O, how far more worthy of man than the extravagant and idle freaks in which wealth sometimes indulges! In ancient times we read of one whose profuse luxury has handed down a name which would otherwise have been forgotten. Of the Roman Apicius we are told by Seneca that he expended on his table nearly a million sterling of our money; that he kept an academy of gourmands, and made the invaluable discovery that the tongue of the red-wing was a delicacy; that he sailed to the coast of Africa to eat crayfish, and not finding them so good as he expected, returned without deigning to land. It is but too true that Christian times could furnish many examples of an

expenditure as foolish and far more wicked than this. Nobler, too, are those works which we have mentioned than the greatest undertakings, which have not the glory of God for their special object. The record of these is kept on earth, and is a fading one; the record of those is in heaven.

CHAPTER XII.

“IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.”

IN speaking in the preceding chapter of those objects which God has commended to his people's care, we adverted to some reasons which show our own great personal interest in them, and which should therefore make us the more willing to support them. We now propose, as briefly as possible, to place before our readers the various motives which should influence them in giving of their substance to the Lord.

Having throughout the Essay described the bestowing of a portion of our increase in the direct cause of God as being a tribute to his sovereignty, a confession that he is the true owner of all things, and an act of obedience to his express commandment, we will not further dwell on these motives, the first and leading ones in the Christian's mind. The feeling that all things come from God; and still belong to him, is at the foundation of the creature's worship of his Creator; and the disposition to obey unreservedly

and from the heart the will of God, whether in believing what he places before us as the objects of our faith, or performing what he requires us to practice, is after all the great distinction between those who really are his and those who know him not, by whatever name they may be called. The first motive, then, in the believer's mind in the gift of his substance is this, that God his Maker and Father in Christ Jesus requires it from him, in token that he and his are God's.

Another strong motive with the believer will be gratitude. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?" is a question that often rises to his mind. Gratitude is indeed the very essence of the Christian's spirit, the unfailing sign of that soul which has been redeemed from death and brought to life eternal. How shall it attain its high aspirations, and find a field of exercise for its ardent longings? How shall the soul, which the "love of Christ has constrained," show the love which it feels in return? It cannot exhibit it in self-chosen acts, in works of whatever kind, whether painful or otherwise, exceeding duty. It were too presumptuous for the creature to choose the worship it should pay to God,—to bind the approval of the All-wise to its self-elected

acts. When the believer, then, reflects on all that God has done for him from the first work of creation to his wondrous love in redemption,—when he reflects truly, though, alas! most inadequately, on his infinite obligations,—when he casts about him to discover what return he can make,—he finds the only acceptable return he can render is his cheerful and joyful acquiescence in the path of defined duty. “Ye are not your own,” said Paul to the Corinthians, “for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, *which are his.*” The grateful mind then seeks to know the will of God, that it may do it from the heart. In the gift of his substance, as in other things, he recognizes God’s expressed pleasure, and that which to the covetous is a reluctant act, gratitude makes delightful, and love makes easy, to the servant of the Lord.

Godliness is true wisdom, even in regard of man’s present advantage. Indeed none but he who glorifies God is wise for himself. So it is in regard of that duty which we are now considering. The giving in God’s cause of that which he requires from us is assuredly the best safeguard we can have for the safety of our substance, and the best guarantee for its increase. Who can lay his hands on

worldly possessions, and stay them with him at his pleasure? They can elude the grasp of their most devoted lover in a thousand ways that are under his control whom all things obey. They have truly the fabled power of Proteus, and none but God has the art of securing them. He has himself made special promises to those who honour him with their substance and expend it to his glory: "Bring ye all the tithe into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house. And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Such is the promise of God on which the believer relies, but from which the unfaithful mind turns with distrust. Yet how foolishly! What hold have we or any one on his possessions? Are we rich and powerful? What warrant have we that before a year is passed, "our riches may not have made to themselves wings and flown away;" our greatness only made our fall the more remarkable? Or are we dependent on our vigor of mind and strength of body for support? From whom comes this vigor of body and mind? From Him whom we are perhaps defrauding of his claim. Do we not then pro-

voke him to withdraw his gifts, and in that case where are we? Wiser, surely, even for this world is the man who with the confiding spirit of a child walks in the path of duty, and leaves himself simply to the care of God. He has a power on his side which orders all things; a wisdom which provides for every want; a love more tender of his safety than the fondest parent's on earth. "That which is presented to God," Hooker says, "is neither lost, nor unfruitfully bestowed, but sanctifies the whole mass; and he by receiving a little undertakes to bless all. In which consideration the Jews were accustomed to call their tithes the hedge of their riches." It is the remark of the greatest philosopher of England in one of his Essays, that great lovers of themselves "are frequently unfortunate. And whereas they have all their life sacrificed to themselves, they become in the end themselves sacrifices to the inconstancy of fortune, whose wings they thought by their self-wisdom to have pinioned." And in exact agreement with this, the writer has heard a friend of his, one who has seen much of the world, and observed it very closely, remark as the fruit of his observation, that in the trying times, which have passed and are passing over this country, he has seen

those who have been accustomed to give freely of their substance in the cause of God surmounting their difficulties, and those who refused God's claim sinking beneath them. Is it but the fulfillment of God's promise, and we need not wonder at it. The examples of Scripture present us with the same result. We will refer briefly but to one, that of Jacob. His vow at Bethel, doubtless, was performed, and what was the consequence? Listen to the words of the sons of selfish Laban: "Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's." Hear his own confession of God's bounty: "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." Regard the wonderful history of Joseph's life, a life fore-ordered for this among other purposes, to supply to the faithful patriarch abundance in the days of dearth. And when the time for dying came, and Jacob from the conclusion of life reviewed in memory its eventful scenes, he included this in his most beautiful description of the character of Jehovah, "The God which fed me all my life unto this day."

Again, the practice of this duty is the best remedy against the sins of covetousness on the one hand, and extravagance on the other. The exercise of any grace is the most effect-

ual safeguard against the prevalence of its opposite vice. It is, indeed, the only effectual safeguard. "Break off thy sins by righteousness," said Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, "and thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." The heart of man cannot be unoccupied: it must be the seat either of good or evil. Against that deadly sin of covetousness, then, the best resource is a glad compliance with God's precept in the bestowal of our substance. Nor is this to be thought a trifling reason to influence us to this duty. Most insidious, most fatal, and most common, is the sin of covetousness. "The disease," says Dr. Chalmers, "is as near to universal as it is virulent. Wealth is the goddess whom all the world worshippeth. There is many a city in our empire, of which, with an eye of apostolical discernment, it may be seen that it is almost wholly given over to idolatry." It begins, perhaps, with the specious plea of providing for the present and future wants of one's family, and passing through intermediate stages, ends not unfrequently in being idolized simply for itself, until we see the fearful picture of the miser, devoted to the acquisition of money without any reference to the gratifications it is capable of procuring, and who, delighted in the posses-

sion of imaginary riches, lives and dies amid the realities of the direst poverty. Nor is it to be thought an unimportant consideration, that the exercise of this grace tends very materially to check that thoughtless extravagance, which is as much opposed to the teaching of God's word as it is productive of misery in this present life. If the Christian is indeed to allocate a fixed and important portion of his income in the cause of God, this will almost of necessity compel him to look somewhat closely to his means and to his expenditure, lest by carelessness he be compelled to break in upon that portion which he now feels to belong to God.

Again, the practice of Christian liberality and kindness is most conducive to our own happiness. It was He who knew the human heart, and the deep joy of a bountiful spirit, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It must be more blessed; for it is to be like God, the source and fountain of blessedness. He is the great Giver from whom all receive, and to whom none can give. His joy, as relates to all without himself, consists in bestowing. The creation, and preservation, and redemption of his creatures, gives satisfaction to the infinite mind. It is so, too, with man, in so far as

he has not lost, and in proportion as he has been restored to, his original condition, as made "in the image of God." Behold the deep joy of a mother over her infant incapable as yet of making any return. The anguish of her travail is forgotten in the delight of having brought a child into the world; and, perhaps, no subsequent joy at its filial affection or its success in life is so heartfelt as that with which she affords it nourishment, or bends over the cradle of her child, who, whether waking or sleeping, is unconscious of her love and care. And so in other matters where the heart is right. We are sure that Howard, the philanthropist, was one of the happiest of men. We could never dream of comparing the happiness of him who dwells all his life long amid scenes of comfort and of elegance, and never sacrifices an iota of his personal convenience to the welfare of others, to his who, out of an ample fortune, spent little of it on himself, who left the lovely scenes of England's rural life, in which none took more sincere pleasure, to pass his life in visiting the gloomy prisons and the noisome lazarettos of the world, to alleviate the sorrows of suffering humanity, regardless of the toil to which he was exposed, and of the danger to

which at last he fell a victim. The Christian poet could enter into his feelings—could rest assured that he was no fit object for pity, but rather of envy, whose love for man led him

“To quit the bliss his rural scenes bestow,
To seek a nobler amid scenes of woe.”

Where selfishness and covetousness have not dried up and extinguished the benevolent affections, there is, indeed, a truer satisfaction in their exercise than in the pleasure we experience in receiving. It was such a feeling that impelled one, whose name deserved to be remembered, the Portuguese Andrada, to continue in an African prison, and laden with fetters, that he might continue to console his fellow-prisoners. This he preferred to his own personal freedom. Of Bishop Burnet an anecdote is told which illustrates this truth. One of his parishioners was distrained for debt, and came to him for some small assistance, when the bishop inquired of him how much would again set him up in his trade. The debtor named the sum, which a servant was immediately ordered to pay him. “Sir,” said the domestic, “it is all we have in the house.” “Well, well,” replied Burnet; “pay it to this poor man; you do

not know the pleasure there is in making a man glad." We have seen already in Scripture the deep joy of Israel on those occasions when the nation was most forward in its offerings to God. As Shakspeare has beautifully described the bounty of Mark Antony by the expression, "There was no winter in it," so in him to whom God has given the grace to be "a cheerful giver," there can be no winter of gloom and discontent, the bountiful spirit is a perpetual source of satisfaction, his good deeds to others, for Christ's sake, return into his bosom a hundredfold.

CHAPTER XIII.

"BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS."

HAVING brought our subject to its close, it only remains for us to say a very few words. The subject of which we have endeavored to treat is beyond any doubt one of great importance, both as regards the honor of God and the state of our own souls before him. On the one hand, there is his cause to uphold and advance in a world which knows him not. Shall we refuse to uphold it? On the other hand, there is the fatal tendency of covetousness, a sin most insidious and most prevalent to guard against, if we would enter into life.

"Who is covetous?" is a question often asked, but to which very few indeed can be brought to reply, "I am the man." And yet covetousness is a sin spoken of in the Scriptures in numberless places, described as most common, and as possessing a deadly power over the soul which has admitted it. It would then be a great advantage if we could by any means help ourselves in finding out whether we may be ourselves, with-

out suspecting it, more or less under its dominion. To value riches is not to be covetous. They are the gift of God, and, like every gift of his, good in themselves, and capable of a good use. They are among the other talents which have been bestowed by the Creator on his creature. To overvalue riches—to put them into a position in our hearts which God did not design them to fill—this is covetousness. The sin to which it is most allied, and with which it is indeed identical, is idolatry. Now the essence of idolatry is the preference of the creature to the Creator, in whatever way this may appear. Idolatry causes man to abandon God for something else, either openly or at heart; and when man turns to God, he also leaves his idols. We will accordingly find that that love of riches, which is branded in Scripture as covetousness, is such a love of them, and such a regard for them, as takes from man his trust in God, and transfers it to his possessions. Jeremiah, warning the covetous, says, “Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth the Lord.” David describes the covetous man as he that “made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches.”

But then the question comes, How is this trust in riches and distrust in God to be known? How is the covetousness of the heart to be distinguished? We know of no test more effectual than this, namely, Are we willing, or do we refuse, to part with such of our substance as God requires at our hands? If we are willing to do so, not in any self-righteous spirit, as though by this means we made God our debtor, but as obedient children, preferring his will to ours, and taking him as our sufficient and unfailing portion, then we may reasonably conclude that wealth is not our idol. If we refuse to do so—if we cannot bear, at his command, to part with a portion or with the whole of our substance, in reliance on his promise of provision, it is then but too plain that we have placed riches in God's room, and are idolaters of them. The ruler that came to Jesus was a covetous man, because being commanded by his Lord to part with all he had, and refusing to do so, he showed that his heart was more set on them than on God, and his trust in them stronger. He saw more to confide in in his houses, and lands, and money, than in that which Christ would provide for him instead, implied in the words, "Come and follow me." The

Israelite was covetous that refused to pay to God his tithe, because he so indicated his preference of present worldly substance to the care and promise of God; he thereby virtually said, "If I give up this, and confide in God, it will be worse for me." Now if we have established the principal object of this essay, and shown that our obligations to God are at least as great as those of Israel were, it will then be plain that we have for ourselves the same test of covetousness. If God requires of us a tenth for himself, and tells us, in lieu thereof, to accept his care, protection, and love, as our ample provision, and we refuse his offer, and prefer our visible and tangible means to his promises, then we think that the sin of covetousness attaches itself to us.

Let us, then, well weigh what has been said upon this subject. There seems to be much in favor of the conclusion we have come to, and are ignorant that any serious objection can be raised against it; for surely, when the cause of God requires it, and when that cause has been intrusted to us, we can give no good reason for bestowing less upon it than it was Israel's duty and Israel's privilege to give. We would then, in conclusion, seriously and affectionately put it to the

reader's conscience to ask himself, after fairly and dispassionately reviewing the reasons we have given, Is there force in them, or not? If it be allowed that there is, we will then only ask, Is nothing to follow from this allowance? Is it to be on our part a nominal admission of God's claim, but a practical independence of its authority, like the empty homage which a powerful vassal or province pays to a feeble superior? But God is not a weak king, and let us beware how we trifle with his claims. Let us rather, however, regard his love and kindness as our strongest motive to obedience, and to Him who made and preserved and redeemed us let us gladly give of that which he has given us.



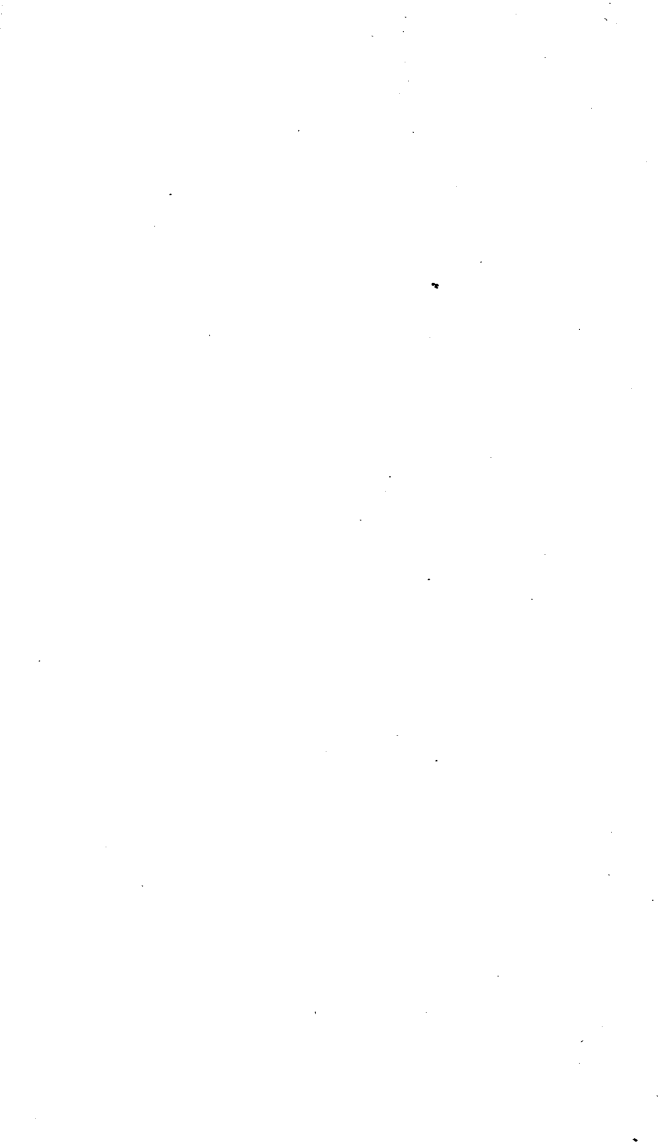
THE

Scripture Rule of Religious
Contribution :

OR,

IN WHAT PROPORTION SHOULD A BELIEVER IN REVE-
LATION DEDICATE HIS PROPERTY TO THE
CAUSE OF GOD?

See that ye abound in this grace also.—2 Cor. viii, 7.



CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE BIBLE	159
II. ABRAHAM.....	169
III. JACOB.....	181
IV. MOSES.....	190
1. The first tithe, p. 192; 2. The second tithe, p. 194; 3. The tithe for the poor, p. 195; 4. The Levite's tithe, p. 197; 5. Stated services, p. 198; 6. Various sacrifices, p. 200; 7. Free-will offerings, p. 201.	
V. THE DAY OF PENTECOST.....	205
VI. MACEDONIA AND CORINTH.....	220
VII. THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.....	237
VIII. EXAMPLES	267
1. The Tabernacle, p. 268; 2. The Temple, p. 275; 3. The widow of Sarepta, p. 282; 4. The widow's mite, p. 285.	
IX. MISCELLANEOUS.....	291
1. Precepts, p. 292; 2. Warnings, p. 297; 3. Promises, p. 303; 4. Prophecies, p. 307.	
X. CONCLUSION.....	314



THE
SCRIPTURE RULE
OF
RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIBLE.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.—PSA. xix, 7.

“To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” It is in the spirit and under the solemn impression of this divine testimony the subject of contributing our property to the cause of God should be discussed and determined. To “search the Scriptures” is a duty commanded by Christ, and comprehends not merely an investigation of what is taught respecting himself, but also of all the duty which we are required to render him. What may we learn *of* him? and, What shall we do *for* him? are both questions to be referred to the authority of Scripture, and to be decided

by it. "What saith the Lord" on the duty of devoting our substance to him?—this is the inquiry now to be entered upon, and this is the manner in which it is to be pursued to a satisfactory conclusion.

At the outset of such an investigation it may be necessary to consider whether it has pleased God to lay down, in his word, any specific rule of religious contribution. Is there any Scripture law upon the subject? Or has it been left to every one to determine the matter for himself, according to his circumstances, and agreeably to his own sense of duty? Most assuredly men have acted as if God had given no specific rule. So far as appears to the eye of an observer, there does not seem to pervade the Christian Church any anxious concern, any jealousy of spirit, lest there should be a law of God in this matter which is not obeyed. Even the public teaching of the pulpit and the press has not given a uniform and "certain sound." A spirit of hesitation and doubtfulness has prevailed extensively. There have been noble exceptions, in both the principles inculcated and the practices pursued by many persons; yet as to the prevailing views and habits of the members of the Christian Church, it is notorious that

they have not recognized the duty of entertaining any decided views or of pursuing any determined practice. Go into any of our most enlightened and best-organized Churches—meet its members as they come away with warm hearts and weeping eyes from the table of the Lord—propose to each of them the plain question, How much of your income do you believe it to be your duty to give to the Lord, and in what proportion is it your habit to employ it? and who does not know that generally no answer could be obtained? The majority, it is to be feared, have not considered, far less determined, the question, “How much owest thou to thy Lord?” And as to those who have sought and discovered and walked in the right path, alas! it may be said, “few there be that find it.”

A few years ago a great impulse was given to the cause of Christian generosity by the publication of a volume under the title of “Mammon; or, Covetousness the Sin of the Christian Church. By the Rev. John Harris.” In that volume the following sentences occur at pages 245–7, (nineteenth thousand): “What *proportion* of our income ought we to devote to charitable uses? If Christian love be permitted to

answer this question, and assign the amount, there is no reason to fear a too scanty allowance. On the other hand, if selfishness be suffered to decide, there is ground to fear that even an inspired reply, could such be obtained, would be heard only to be overruled. Besides which, the gospel of Christ, in harmony with its great design of establishing a reign of love, leaves its followers to assess themselves. It puts into their hands, indeed, a claim upon their property, but leaves the question, *how much?* to be determined by themselves. In assisting them to fill the blank with the proper assessment, the only step which it takes is to point them to the cross of Christ; and, while their eye is fixed there in admiring love, to say, ‘How much owest thou unto thy Lord?’ ‘Freely ye have received, freely give.’

“It is observable that Abraham and Jacob, on particular occasions, voluntarily devoted to God—what afterward became a divine law for the Jewish nation—a *tenth* of their property. Without implying that their example has any obligation on us, we may venture to say that one *tenth* of our whole income is an approved proportion for charity for those who, with *so* doing, are able to

support themselves and families. For the more opulent, and especially for those who have no families, a larger proportion would be equally easy. For some, one-half would be too little; while for others, a twentieth, or even a fiftieth, would require the nicest frugality and care. Indeed, of many among the poor, it may be said, that if they give *anything* they give their *share*,—they *cast in more* than all their brethren.” It is cheerfully and gratefully acknowledged that the volume from which these sentences have been extracted proved to be seasonable and salutary in no inconsiderable degree. It is eloquent, earnest, and effective. On this special topic, however, to which the quoted passage refers—the proportion of contribution to income—a few strictures may be permitted, and are required. Without at all entering on other exceptions which have been taken to the volume on the ground of a defective statement of Christian doctrine, its views of proportionate giving may be fairly disputed. It is worthy of observation, that in the whole book this is the only passage directly referring to that branch of the subject. So far, therefore, as it is concerned, that topic requires yet to be discussed. It is at least too important to be so slightly

dismissed. There is, besides, a hesitation in the manner of setting forth what the law of the Scriptures is upon the subject, which greatly weakens its force. It is not misrepresenting it to say, that it recognizes no specific law of giving now binding on the conscience and practice of the Christian. It is taught, that "the gospel of Christ leaves the question, *how much?* to be determined by Christians themselves,"—that while "we may venture to say that *one tenth* of our whole income is an approved proportion of charity," this is to be understood only of "those who, with so doing, are able to support themselves and families,"—that there are some for whom to give "a twentieth or fiftieth would require the nicest frugality and care,"—and that "of many among the poor it may be said, if they give *anything* they give their share." Are these representations in accordance with the revealed will of God? We hold that they are inconsistent with it. It is our belief that a law for the regulation of giving is laid down in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. It is our conviction that no one, taking these for his guide, can devote less than a tenth of his available income to the cause of God. He may give more, as much more as he will

or his circumstances warrant, but less he cannot possibly give and act consistently with the inspired standard of man's duty. The case of a pauper in a poorhouse may be pleaded against this view; but what income has he? He has none, and where there is no income there is no obligation. Let that pauper, however, receive a shilling from the passing visitant, and he is bound to recognize the claim of God to at least the tenth. Yes! and he may devote it to him with as high a principle and as holy an affection as he who gives his thousands out of his great abundance. Or we may be told of others who are sunk in debt and under obligations which they are unable to discharge; but what comes to them is not their own, it is the just property of their creditors, and can only pass through their hands to them. Every man must be able to say with David, in his religious contributions, "I have of my own proper good given to the house of my God." Let the subject be cleared of all extraneous matter—let the question stand in its simplicity, What proportion of his income should a believer in Revelation dedicate to the cause of God? And without hesitation it is affirmed he cannot consistently give less than a tenth. It will be observed the phrase,

a believer in Revelation, is used designedly, for our appeal is to the whole word of God. The Jewish and the Christian Scriptures are not to be paraded against each other as though they inculcated different or contrary doctrines. They are together the exposition of one system of religion. They contain the records of various dispensations of religion, but the religion is throughout one and the same. The same moral law pervades the Old and New Testament. Their principles are identical. These are taught in a peculiar manner under the ancient economy, and they are brought out differently under the present dispensation. Essentially and substantially they teach the same lessons. Our inquiry, therefore, will lead us to investigate the instructions of both on the subject of giving to the Lord. Beginning with the early intimations of the divine will, we shall be carried forward to the meridian light of the last and best economy. The subject is regarded to be so important as to have a prominent place in all parts of divine Revelation. Our object shall be to compare scripture with scripture, and so learn the will of God. Their scattered light will be viewed apart, and then, brought together, shall be made to converge their rays on the

one subject. Thus in the light of the Lord we hope we shall see light.

In conclusion, if God has given a law, it ought to be known and obeyed. Great injury has arisen to the cause of Christ from the indistinct and undecided views which have prevailed respecting the duty of religious contribution. We may give, or we may withhold; we may give little or much, every man may do what is right in his own eyes—this is the doctrine which has guided the Church too long. On the contrary, we hold that “God hath spoken once, yea, twice;” that he has plainly made known his will in his word; that he has given a law to regulate the conduct of Jews and Gentiles; that no believer in his word can consistently give less than the tenth of his income to the cause of God; that he ought to know this, and act upon it; and that he cannot neglect to do so without sin. For these statements, we “bring forth our strong reasons” from the divine record. While we do so, let us “tremble at the commandment of the Lord.” Great evil and neglect have arisen from the members of the Church being hitherto “at ease in Zion” on this important question. May much good arise from the prevalence of another and a better spirit! Something

needs to be done. There is indecision in the counsels of the Church, and feebleness in its efforts. Surely if its members saw their duty and the law that God has given to regulate it, they would be roused to more consistent and vigorous efforts. If any are offended with our plainness, we can only plead the word of the Lord. "We believe, therefore we have spoken." "We speak as unto wise men, judge ye what we say." The time demands new views of duty, and all we ask is, that the members of the Church of Christ shall honestly inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Let us adopt the Psalmist's prayer in reference to the duty into which we are about to inquire, "Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." If "whatever is not of faith is sin," we must either be guided by the law and authority of God's word in giving to him of our substance, or our conduct in this respect must meet with the reproof, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

CHAPTER II.

ABRAHAM.

He gave him tithes of all.—Gen. xiv, 20.

THE accomplished author of "Mammon," referring to the conduct of Abraham and Jacob in giving a tenth of their property to God, uses the phrase, "without implying that their example has any obligation on us." The meaning of this saying is by no means clear. It would be injustice to interpret it to signify that, in the writer's opinion, the example of Abraham and Jacob should have no influence upon us, although such a meaning might fairly be ascribed to the terms employed. It must be explained as conveying the sentiment that in this particular case we are not bound to imitate their example. Even so understood, however, its correctness may be questioned. We cannot but regard it as one of those unsound interpretations which prevail so generally on the subject of religious contribution. For in these views this distinguished author is far from being singular. In an admirable sermon preached

before the London Missionary Society, by the Rev. Dr. Brown, of Edinburgh, so long ago as the year 1821, on the duty "of pecuniary contribution to religious purposes," the following sentiment is expressed: "From the circumstance of the *tenth* of the income of the Israelites being appropriated by express divine law to pious purposes, it is surely a fair conclusion, that among the middle and higher classes in all ordinary cases, Christians should not devote a less proportion of their worldly substance to the service of God." Why is the rule confined to the middle and higher classes? It is our conviction that the Spirit of God did not so intend it. The rule is one of universal obligation. To make this apparent is a prominent design of these pages. And it is to enforce the necessity of proving and confirming such a view that reference is made at all to such eminent servants of the Lord as have been named. Their views are, in our judgment, defective, and not sufficiently explicit. We think they have not done full justice to the plainness and authority of the inspired rule and practice. We are deeply solicitous to place the subject in what seems to us to be the proper aspect, to lay the duty of giving to God on its right basis, and with this ob-

ject the following remarks are submitted on the example of Abraham.

It is by no means a right principle to approve and imitate whatever is recorded to have been done by the eminent servants of God in other ages. Abraham did many things that were reprehensible, and they are narrated, with their consequences, for our warning. Still, it is written, "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and Abraham is named as one of them. A careful consideration of each case must be entered into in order to ascertain whether it is designed to be an example for imitation or a beacon for warning. Its history will usually enable us to determine. As to the specific case before us, that of Abraham, there can be no hesitation how it is to be understood; it is expressly recorded that we may go and do likewise. We are bound to imitate him. Of this position the evidence is full and clear.

An inspired writer in the New Testament expresses approval of Abraham's conduct: "Consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils." He speaks with high respect of his character, as a distinguished servant of the Most High, and in this par-

ticular instance applauds what he did. Although, therefore, the incident is introduced from the life of the patriarch for the illustration of another subject, yet the act which he performed is approved, and in similar circumstances we are called upon to act in the same manner.

There is something, indeed, very peculiar and impressive in the record of this part of Abraham's conduct. It is the first notice contained in the Scriptures of the dedication of any distinct proportion of property to God. This circumstance alone increases its interest and strengthens its obligation upon us. Its novelty has a charm that ought to please and captivate. In this instance, however, it is the singular case of novelty in combination with antiquity. While novelty pleases, antiquity commands our reverence. If we inquire after "the old paths," here they are, and it ought surely to recommend them to us that Abraham walked in them. The traveler in Palestine enjoys the scenery the more, as he thinks how the eyes of Abraham gazed upon it, or his feet trod upon its surface. Why are we to be less impressed by his higher mental exercises or moral engagements? As these are more exalted in their nature, their claim is greater upon our attention.

There is another feature in the manner of the record not to be overlooked. The fact is stated as to the conduct of Abraham, as though there was nothing remarkable in the mere act. It is given as if he had only complied with a well-known usage. His dedication of the tenth of the spoils to the service of God must have been in accordance with the practice of the times or the known will of God to accept it. In either case we are entitled to infer a revelation had been given of the divine mind upon the subject. It must have been conveyed to Abraham either by tradition from former ages or by an express communication from heaven. He must have been satisfied the law came from God, or he would not have practiced it. We do not expect to find will-worship in the "father of the faithful" and "the friend of God." The fact that he gave the tenth is sufficient to prove that he knew it to be in accordance with the will of God, and this carries us to the conclusion that a divine revelation or law had been given upon the subject. It is customary to reason after this manner in other questions kindred to that in hand. The existence of sacrifice in the time of Adam is held to be a proof that its origin was divine. God appointed it, it is argued, or he would not have

accepted it, nor would Adam have offered it. So also with the observance of the Sabbath on the first day of the week—our authority is the example of the apostles. We infer from their conduct that they had a divine warrant for it, although there is not the record of an express law. They would not have acted as they did without knowing the will of their Master. And this is all we require in the conduct of Abraham. It is to be vindicated on the ground of a known law which regulated the practice. And if so, we are bound to conform to that law as well as Abraham. His example is recorded for our imitation.

What, then, is the amount of his example? What was it that Abraham did? We have no desire to press his example beyond its legitimate boundary. He gave to Melchizedek, the priest of God, the tenth of the spoils he had taken in battle as he returned from the slaughter of the kings. God had given him the victory, and he thus acknowledged the divine interposition and his own obligation. His example abundantly establishes, that in every deliverance we should honor God, and especially that we should declare our sense of his goodness when he preserves our property, by dedicating a portion of it

to him. We may go further. If God is pleased in his providence to increase our property, we should observe his hand in it, and give at least a tenth to him. Whether, therefore, our property is preserved or increased, the example of Abraham establishes a divine claim to at least the tenth. Here, then, we gain an undoubted rule of conduct applicable to given circumstances in our situation. Our property, like that of Abraham or Lot, for whom he contended, is continually exposed to destruction; and if God protects or preserves it, we should devote to him a tenth of whatever it is calculated to yield us. We are continually receiving new favors from the Lord, and whatever he confers we should in like manner acknowledge him. We will not at present press the inquiry how far such a rule would cover the entire income of every man. We are satisfied to confine it to such special cases as may legitimately fall under that of Abraham—to that portion of our property that has been preserved from danger or added to our former store. Other cases will arise to extend the rule. In the mean time there are certain claims upon our imitation of the conduct of Abraham which cannot be passed over without special notice. “Know ye therefore that

they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Abraham's faith was his peculiarity, and with every genuine Christian it is the same. The faith of Abraham wrought in his heart a moral renovation, and the same faith is always productive of the same result. Faith and regeneration are twin-sisters, ever found associated, born together and strengthening one another. Having therefore the mind and heart of Abraham, his views and feelings, we must act as he also acted. The same principles produce the same practices in all ages. As then "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." As then he that was taught by the Spirit and governed by the Spirit acted toward God, "even so it is now." Abraham gave to God the tenth of the spoils, and so will they act who inherit the faith of Abraham and are entitled to be called his children. The Christian soldier returning with the prize of victory will dedicate the tenth to God. The Christian merchant, having rescued his property from danger, will give the tenth of all it would have yielded. The Christian minister, or physician, or lawyer, whatever have been

the gains of his profession, will in the same proportion lay his offering on the altar of the Lord. The Christian man, in the humblest or the highest circumstances of life, as the Lord has rendered to him, so will he return a corresponding measure for his service. All that are of the divine faith of Abraham will approve themselves his children, if they act consistently, by doing as he did, and giving as he gave.

Nor let us omit to notice the situation of Abraham, when he acted thus liberally toward the cause of God. It was at an early period of his history in the promised land. As yet God had given him "none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on." It was long afterward he had to supplicate as a favor from the children of Heth a spot where he might bury his dead. He was "a pilgrim and stranger in the land." And although God had increased his flocks and herds, yet still his situation and property were apparently most insecure, and he might be considered a poor and very dependent man. But he gave the tenth of all. How readily might selfishness have found an excuse to withhold! He might have pleaded that he knew not how soon he might be in straits, and that it was his duty to provide

against them. Or he might have argued, since God gave him such spoils, he might conclude it was the divine will he should possess them all. But no—thankful to God and confiding in his providence, he gave to him the tenth of what he had gained. Where now shall we find an excuse for the many apologies which our selfishness is wont to plead? The example of Abraham silences them all. And the lesson is irresistible, that in all circumstances, whether poor or rich, we should acknowledge God in the preservation or increase of our worldly substance by dedicating at least a tenth to him.

There was also a nobility in the conduct of Abraham that cannot fail to command our highest admiration. We have seen his spirit toward God, let us look at his conduct on the same occasion to men. “The king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said, I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich; save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men

which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre ; let them take their portion." Here is an example of noble-mindedness. Generosity, wisdom, and justice, are united in his high-minded decision. The meanness of the world is overcome by the elevation of right principles. He who is right-minded toward God is generous and large-hearted to man. He who gives to the cause of God is the friend of every effort that breathes benevolence to men.

What a contrast to Abraham is Lot ! He went to Sodom to gain the world, and he lost it there. He departed from God, and he fell into the hands of bloody men. His life and property were recovered, but he was indebted for both to the Lord's servant. He does not appear to have profited by the chastisement, and he was driven at last out of the wicked city, when he left his property in the flames. His last refuge was in a cave of the mountain, where he was abandoned to temptation and fell into sin. How fearful must have been the accusations of his conscience, for he was "a righteous man !" He presents a fearful example of what even a godly man may suffer from worldliness. Let us be warned by his example, and let it operate to present more clear-

ly to our minds, and enforce more powerfully on our hearts, that of Abraham, who dedicated to God, gratefully and joyfully, "a tenth of all."

CHAPTER III.

JACOB.

Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.—Gen. xxviii, 22.

WHAT creation is to the philosopher, such are the Scriptures to the Christian. Each has his own book, although either should, and often does, study them both. The botanist goes into the fields and gardens, examines their plants and flowers, classifies them according to their properties, observes their habits and influences, and from the whole deduces the laws and principles by which they are governed, and lays down the rules by which his conduct toward them should be guided. So does the astronomer proceed in his observations upon the heavens, the mineralogist with his rocks and stones, and the metaphysician in his study of the human mind. In like manner the student of the Scriptures is occupied, whatever be the department of their varied contents to which his attention is directed,—their doctrines, or precepts, or examples, or promises. It has become fashionable to decry a systematic study of the sacred volume; but it may be

confidently asserted that he who does not so study it will never properly understand it, nor will he who does not so teach ever prove successful in imparting instruction. It is on this principle we are desirous of proceeding in our present inquiry. We are collecting facts out of the Scriptures that we may deduce principles and found rules of conduct upon them. Our investigation is confined to one species, as the botanist's to plants in the field of nature. We wish to ascertain what was done and approved in the matter of contribution to the cause of God, that we may learn our duty. We have seen how it was in the case of Abraham, and we now direct our attention to that of his most distinguished descendant, the patriarch Jacob.

It is worthy of notice that they both acted on the same rule, that of devoting a tenth to the Lord. It is therefore plain this was an early and well-known rule of conduct. They no doubt derived it from a common source, and that, in all likelihood, was an express divine command handed down from the beginning to generation after generation. There were many features common to the two patriarchs, and their use of their worldly property. We have already remarked on those which characterized the liberality

of Abraham, and, omitting the same traits, so far as they are found in Jacob, we shall confine our attention to what was peculiar in him.

The first appearance of a generous spirit in Jacob was on the occasion of his departure from his father's house, to escape the fury of his provoked and injured brother Esau, and when he had gone so far upon his journey as Bethel. Previously to this time there is reason to believe he was under the dominion of a worldly and grasping spirit, so much so as not to stop at plans of deceitfulness and acts of injustice. In concert with his mother, Rebekah, he devised a scheme to deceive his father, and possess himself of the portion of his elder brother. It is no excuse for his conduct that Providence had revealed to his mother how the elder should be subjected to the younger; it was rather an aggravation of his sin, for he and his accomplice should have confided in that Providence to fulfill the divine promise in his own lawful time and manner. Jacob, therefore, is presented to us, in the truthfulness of the Scriptures, as in the outset of life characterized by selfishness and cunning. This constitutional temperament indeed appears again and again throughout his entire

history. Though it was overcome by grace, still nature often asserted its power. And many were the troubles into which the patriarch was brought by the remainder of this indwelling sin. He had a struggle all his days, and did not always come off victorious. It is interesting and instructive to observe the providence and power of God breaking this natural propensity of Jacob's corrupt heart.

What first strikes us with surprise is, that his very sin was overruled to be the occasion of its own overthrow. His love of the world led him into sin, and that sin drove him from his father's house. He sought all his father's property, and he was driven from it all. So soon did a retributive Providence overtake him, but it was guided by mercy. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." When the outcast son reached the end of his first day's journey, he sank down exhausted in body and sad in heart. He felt his solitary and desolate situation. We may assume that he looked to God that night as he had never done before. He laid himself down to sleep in a frame of mind such as he had never previously experienced, feeling that God was his only refuge, and resolved to seek him for his portion. The God of his fathers was not unmindful of their penitent son.

He was not forsaken in his solitude and sorrow. The Holy Spirit visited him with his converting grace. "He dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac." The promises made to them were then renewed to him, and more were added. The mind of Jacob was enlightened by this revelation of God, and his heart was touched. From that day he showed himself a child of God. A new nature was given to him, and he entered upon a new course of life. One marked change was from selfishness to generosity. "Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." What a gracious change! Before all was for the world, and all the world would hardly satisfy him; now he asks only what is necessary for a sustenance!

Before all was for self, and nothing for God; now all is for God, and self is overlooked. The connection between the conversion of the soul and liberality to the cause of God is very marked. No sooner is that blessed change produced than this effect follows from it. The Apostle Paul expresses the same sentiment when he says, "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then unto us by the will of God." Jacob gave himself to God in his conversion, and then his property. There is no doubt in some a natural generosity when compared with others, but there is no enlightened, enlarged, and consistent generosity but such as proceeds from a new heart under the dominion of grace. And wherever the new heart is found, it is impregnated with zeal for the glory of God and a deep interest in the extension of his cause, with a corresponding effort of labor and generosity of contribution. This generosity will be no doubt much affected by the circumstances of the convert, although it be in all radically the same grace. It will be interesting to trace some of its outgoings in Jacob.

Like Abraham, he fixed on the tenth. This is noticed again only to impress it on the attention. That was the acknowledged standard, and wherever grace renewed the

heart, its subject embraced the law of God as its guide.

Unlike Abraham, Jacob's dedication was not confined to one occasion or one possession. It comprehended his whole life and his whole property. As long as he lived he would dedicate this portion of his substance to God, and whatever he possessed, the tenth of it should be the Lord's.

Bringing these two cases of Abraham and Jacob together, what a rule do we discover for the guidance of all who would be governed by the law of Revelation! On all special occasions of the preservation or increase of property there is to be a special dedication of a tenth. Of all ordinary and stated income there is to be the dedication of a tenth. Can it for a moment be supposed it was by a mere accident the two patriarchs fell upon the same amount of contribution? Or is it to be supposed that either fixed the sum of his own mere will and pleasure? The tone of approval with which the conduct of both is narrated shows how agreeable it was to God, and we are shut up to the conclusion that they both adopted for a guide the law which their God had given, and that it is morally binding now as much as it was then.

This is not a little confirmed by what after-

ward occurred in the life of Jacob. It appears that he forgot his vow, solemnly as he had made it. God granted him more than he sought. He returned to his father's house in peace, and greatly enriched. Yet the stone which was to be God's house, and to which his property was to be dedicated, was forgotten. He was therefore reproved and summoned to the promised duty. "God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." The patriarch discovered a gracious disposition in an immediate and ready obedience. He made it a season of a thorough reformation and revival in his household. It is particularly to be observed that he called to mind the circumstances of his first dedication of himself to God, obtained fresh promises from God, and engaged with enlarged liberality in the service of God. "He set up a pillar in the place where God talked with him, even a pillar of stone, and he poured a drink-offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon." The promised dedication was demanded by God when it was forgotten by his servant, and when it was presented it was accepted and approved.

What is the legitimate inference from the conduct of Jacob? When his heart was brought under the power of true religion, he gave the tenth of his income to God. Will not every truly converted soul feel the power of his example? This patriarch is continually presented to us in the Scriptures as a most approved servant of God. His faults are not concealed, but recorded for our warning. Still his gracious excellence is much commended, and his example is to be imitated. Shall there be an exception to that part of it which binds him to devote his property to God? The Christian who acknowledges the obligation of conformity to the patriarch in other graces, but overlooks this one, will require to assign a reason for the exception. It is to be feared many fail to imitate him in this respect who have not considered how they are to be justified in so doing. Let them think of the patriarch's example, and they will see good cause to follow it. They are as much bound to conform to him in this respect as in his agonizing prayer at Peniel. Both are recorded for our benefit, and that benefit is gained only when we do as he did. It is a Christian purpose to say, "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

CHAPTER IV.

MOSES.

The law was given by Moses.—John 1, 17.

WE come now to a still clearer light, and to a firmer footing. Abraham gave a tenth of all the spoils, and there is reason to believe he did so in compliance with an early and well-known law of divine authority. Jacob vowed he would give the tenth of all he possessed, and he came to this resolution whenever his mind was brought under the power of truth, and was made the subject of a gracious change. It is a serious thing to depart from the practice of these men of God. If we have the faith of Abraham and the piety of Jacob, we shall assuredly do as they did, and at least give the tenth of all we have to God. We are willing to rest the question here, and ask, whether it is conceivable that any one having the character of these patriarchs could withhold this portion of his substance from the service of Him who gave it all, especially when he knows that this was their practice? We are not left, however, to infer what our conduct ought to be from that of others.

God has given a law, and we do well to consider it. There is express statute, associated no doubt with many temporary ceremonies, yet *substantially* unchangeable and binding universally and forever. Let it not be said that since God publicly proclaimed this law for the first time to the Jews, we are to infer it had never been law before. Is it likely that God adopted for a law what had previously become a prevailing practice? How much more probable it is that the prevailing practice had originated in an ancient law, given by God, yet of the first publication of which we are not informed? We find that the law of the Sabbath was published to the Jews in the ten commandments upon Sinai; yet that same law had been given at the beginning, and we find it in the earliest records of the creation. The original law, there is reason to fear, had fallen into disuse, and therefore it is solemnly renewed and sanctioned. Even this reason, however, was not necessary to justify its republication. The same laws are again and again proclaimed and enforced by their divine Author. This remark is applicable to all the ten commandments. They were all laws of God before they were published to the Jews. From the beginning they had been the rule of human

conduct; yet where can it be shown that each of them is, in so many words, to be found? They were authoritative from the first—they were known to the servants of God—they were, more or less, obeyed by them. And yet we find them embodied in a special law for the guidance of Israel. We believe it to have been the same with the law of giving to the Lord—it had been enjoined from the beginning, and it was proclaimed afresh and placed in new connections when God revealed his will to Moses and Aaron. The reënactment of this law is a subject of deep interest, and its associations are full of instruction. We shall therefore inquire with some minuteness into the arrangements which God was pleased to prescribe, and for this purpose shall place them separately, as we find them in the ancient code of Israel's laws.

I.—THE FIRST TITHE.

“All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord.” “Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service, which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congrega-

tion." The statute is explicit, and its special requirements are worthy of careful observation, for they cast much light on the general question under consideration. The lowest proportion which the law could accept was a tenth, conveying the sentiment that less had never previously been given, nor could less suffice now. The law of Moses was not designed to reduce the claims of God on the gratitude and offerings of his people. This tenth was also exacted on all property, "the seed of the land and the fruit of the tree" alike. All came from God, and in all God is to be acknowledged. "Of thine own have we given thee," said David, and the same is in all ages the language of piety. And for what was this tenth demanded? For the children of Levi, a reward for their service in the tabernacle of the congregation. It was for them as the ministers of God. The end of the law was the glory of Jehovah, that the knowledge and worship of his name might be propagated and extended. Its essence lies in this, that God by an express statute demands the tenth of our property for the promotion of his cause. The *principle* of the law is as binding now as it was on Israel.

II.—THE SECOND TITHE.

“Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy vine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.” This was clearly a different tithe from the former. That was given for the support of the Levite, this for the maintenance of the various feasts and sacrifices. Behold, then, the increased demand on Israel: first a tenth for one purpose—then a second tenth for another—so that by a permanent statute every Israelite was required to give at least a fifth of his yearly income to the Lord. Under former dispensations we read only of a tenth. As the world grows older the claims of God are not lessened. Privileges are increased, and responsibilities are increased with them: “To whom much is given, of them shall much be required.” The Jew might say, “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were

committed the oracles of God." But as he thus reasoned he was summing up arguments to enforce the claim of God on himself and his property. Let this principle also be distinctly apprehended, for it will come with mighty force when it is applied to the privileges and responsibilities of the best, the brightest, and the last dispensation.

III.—THE TITHE FOR THE POOR.

"At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gate. And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." It is doubtful whether this third tithe be entirely distinct from the other two already noticed, and therefore whether it were an additional claim on Israel. It may have been so, but the evidence is not fully satisfactory. We found no argument therefore on that consideration, but we cannot overlook this new appropriation of property, this additional object of generosity

proposed to Israel. "The poor shall never cease out of the land;" and one design of this providence is to teach us gratitude for our own mercies and kindness to the necessitous. Generosity to the cause of God is here linked with benevolence to man. It is the same condition of mind that produces the double fruit. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, and mind, and strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The love of man springs out of the love of God. If we love the Creator we shall love the creature whom he hath made. The love of the father ensures the love of his child. Let none fear that because much is demanded and done for the cause of God, the interests of man will be therefore likely to be neglected. The reverse may be expected. And let none excuse themselves by alleging they have so much to do for man they can do nothing for the cause of God. It is a mere pretense. Jesus could say to God, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," and at the same time he healed the bodies and saved the souls of men. He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.

IV.—THE LEVITES' TITHE.

“Speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up a heave-offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe.”

The Levite's concern with the tithes was not merely to receive and enjoy them. He had his own tenth to pay to Aaron and his sons. None were exempt in Israel. All were recipients, and all must acknowledge the bounty of God. The ministers of religion are not merely entitled to live by the altar which they serve, they are bound to devote of that which they receive to the cause of God. The Apostle Paul applies the former part of this statement to the ministers of Christ, even adducing the Jewish illustration, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn;” and it will not be questioned that the latter part of it is equally applicable under the Christian economy. The lesson is clearly taught that all should devote to the Lord of that which they receive. No rank or station can plead immunity. The higher the position the stronger the claim. Ministers of the gospel especially

should feel the powerful claims that the cause of God has upon them. They are exalted to great honor as ambassadors for Christ. They should manifest the generous spirit of the religion which they teach. They should be an example to the Church in all things. But if they shall be so, the people to whom they minister must consider their liabilities. They cannot give of that which they possess not. It is the duty of the Churches to put it in the power of their ministers to be examples of liberality. In doing so they consult their own interests. In that respect they will find the saying eminently true, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." They are just filling up the reservoir which shall pour out fresh streams of pure water to refresh and fertilize themselves.

V.—STATED SERVICES.

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim, even these are my feasts."

They were to be observed at all times—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, every seventh year, every fiftieth year. Each of these had its own peculiar claims and respon-

sibilities. One feature, however, marked them all—the expensive character of the service. The Israelite might indeed say, “I will not render to the Lord of that which cost me naught.” He could not do so. The prescribed service was in itself a serious claim. It is true there were services adapted to the poor; but let it be remembered there was no exception for the poor; the poorest must give. It is said in “Mammon” for some to give “a twentieth, or even a fiftieth, would require the nicest frugality and care.” This was not the spirit of the ancient law of Israel. Every man received something, and every man must give something. Where is the exception releasing the poorest from the tenth? This law is as wise as it is stringent. The poor man is benefited by the exercise of the “nicest frugality and care.” It is the most salutary discipline for himself and his household. It is the very habit which the poor most need to form and cherish; it elevates the mind to save something for the cause of God. He knew human nature well who has imposed this duty upon it. “He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.” It is a mistake to lead the poor to think they have nothing to do or to give to God. This is a

lesson never more required to be taught than in our day. The rich are to give abundantly out of their abundance, and the poor are to give out of their poverty. God designedly made his service heavy in the ancient economy. His demands never ceased, and none were exempted.

VI.—VARIOUS SACRIFICES.

“This is the law of the burnt-offering, of the meat-offering, and of the sin-offering, and of the trespass-offering, and of the peace-offerings.”

No doubt these various services had mainly a typical meaning; and very gracious the instructions were which they were designed and calculated to convey. In the burnt-offering we behold the sacrifice of the Son of God; in the meat-offering, the devoted gratitude of the believer presenting himself, all he is and has, as an offering to the Lord; in the sin-offering and trespass-offering, that life of faith upon the Son of God, and that constant effort after purity of life which a sense of sin and the love of holiness inspire; and in the peace-offering, the fellowship with God, without which the renewed soul cannot rest, with the manner in which it is to be maintained, even through the peace-

speaking blood of Christ. All this is true, and it is important. Yet there is, besides, a moral aim in all these institutes not to be overlooked. Observe the state of mind which they are calculated to produce and foster. They require intelligence, consideration, discrimination, frugality, and carefulness. They teach how much God demands and how much we must do in order to render it. They enlighten, enlarge, and exercise the mind. They train the soul to lofty conceptions, to large services, and to make sacrifices for God. They teach us to make religion our business, and they give us to understand that the requirements of the Lord at our hands are neither few nor small.

VII.—FREE-WILL OFFERINGS.

“These things shall ye do unto the Lord in your set feasts, beside your vows, and your free-will offerings.”

Over and above all that has been described, the Israelite might dedicate whatever besides he desired unto the Lord. There was a limit on the one side, and the law made its demands, but there was no limit on the other, and the devout soul might devote as it would. In all who had a right frame of mind this would not be a dead letter. Much

would be added to the requirements of the law. As fresh occasions arose for gratitude to God, in the preservation of health, recovery from sickness, the increase of property, or the prosperity of friends, God would be acknowledged in all. This, therefore, is to be added to what was noticed before as the requirement of law and statute. A fifth proportion of all was certainly demanded. It may have been more, if the tithe for the poor is considered to be distinct from that for the Levite and that for the feasts. It is not too much, on that interpretation, to assume there was a fourth required. And when to all these are added the vows and free-will offerings, may it not be alleged that the devout and consistent Israelite felt the claim of God to be annually upon him for not less than a third of the income which was graciously confided to him?

This is the conclusion to which the review of the ancient law of Israel has conducted us. We appeal to the impartial inquirer whether we have not arrived at this issue by an unvarnished statement of clear statutes and undoubted facts. And now what is the moral to be drawn from all? God has shown us that he considered it good for Israel to press his demands upon them at all

times and seasons for all pious and benevolent purposes, and in all measures adapted to the rich and the poor, and obligatory upon all. This was the education he gave his own children whom he adopted to train for himself. Was it not manifestly designed to counteract the selfishness of the human heart, and open within it a fountain of generosity and benevolence? As the water drawn from the living well is renewed again with quickened and enlarged supplies, so as the heart is accustomed to give out of its fullness, the streams of grace and providence supply it afresh. The vapors that arise from the earth gather into clouds, and thence distill again to water and fertilize the ground whence they first proceeded, and so he that giveth getteth, he that does good receives good, and as we yield ourselves and our property to God we are filled with the fullness of God. Truly is charity said to be twice blessed—blessed in him that gives no less than in him that receives. With these facts and views before us, it is confidently asked, what proportion of his substance will the believer in Revelation dedicate to the service of God? Can he give less than a tenth? Is he consistent? And can he satisfy his own conscience if he does so? What is the law

of the Bible, and of God its Author? Is it optional with every man to give or withhold as he pleases? to give in what measure and proportion he thinks proper? We are confirmed in the conviction that no enlightened and consistent believer can devote less than the tenth to the Lord of the annual income which Providence has placed at his disposal for the maintenance of himself and those who are dependent upon him. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." We think we have spoken the truth of God, and stand on the sure ground of his testimony; let all beware how they depart from it by a false or unsound interpretation involving a great practical question bearing mightily on the cause of God in the earth.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

All that believed were together, and had all things common.
Acts ii, 44.

HEAR what the law saith ! What saith it ? It saith that Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils—that Jacob gave the tenth of all he possessed—that Israel was required to give a tenth to the Levite, a tenth to the feasts, a tenth every third year to the poor, to give constantly, to give for all pious and charitable purposes, and over and above all that the statute prescribed to give the free-will offerings which gratitude and love might prompt. This is what the law saith. We leave it to produce its effect on all who regard it; and we proceed now to inquire, What saith the gospel ? For this purpose we direct attention to its opening scene. That scene was no doubt intended to give a faithful representation, and convey a just impression of the new economy—what it was to be, what it was to do, and what was to be expected from it. On a full consideration it will be found every way worthy of the gracious and

glorious dispensation which it was designed to usher into the world.

At the outset let us inquire what we are to expect from Christianity on the subject of religious contribution. We are to remember it is the consummation of a religion which had been taught from the beginning. It is somehow assumed by many that it set aside all that had gone before, and was altogether a new religion. This is a most unsound and dangerous principle. What was merely ceremonial and had served its purpose was certainly withdrawn, but the great principles inculcated from the first remained as they were, and Christianity is simply Judaism perfected. We are, therefore, not to expect that on every subject treated under the first dispensation we shall have new and distinct instructions laid down in the second. The lessons of Moses passed into the hands of the disciples in the school of Christ, and the New Testament did not supplant, although it more fully explained and powerfully enforced, the instructions of the Old Testament. These remarks have an important bearing on the subject before us. The views of giving to the Lord, held and taught and practiced by Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, are not disallowed by Christ. They were not merely

ceremonial, and have not ceased to be binding. So far as they were founded on the principles of human nature and the relations of man to God, they are the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. They arise out of the nature and necessity of our position toward both God and man, and cannot cease to be obligatory. We are therefore to study the teaching and example of ancient patriarchs and lawgivers on this subject, as much as those who lived in their times, and served God under their dispensations. Nor are we to be surprised if we do not find any new and explicit directions in the New Testament. It may be assumed these were given sufficiently before. There are various subjects of great moment in which this was manifestly the course pursued by the early Christian Church. We may instance the admission of the children of believers to the membership of the Church by the initiatory ordinance of baptism. It has often been remarked there is no express appointment of that observance of the ordinance in the New Testament. But it has been very properly replied, it was not necessary there should be any such fresh appointment. It had ever been the law of the Church of God to receive the children of its members into fellowship. Abraham and Moses alike

practiced it in their day. Christianity assumed its existence. It did not abrogate it, and unless it could be shown that it did abrogate it, the observance must be regarded as continuing in all its force. Similar remarks might be applied to the perpetuation of the Sabbath. There is no fresh and express appointment of it under Christianity, yet the judgment of the Christian Church has in all ages been almost unanimous on the subject of its perpetuity. Let the same view be taken of religious contribution, and it will show that the instructions drawn from Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, remain in all their authority, although a word had not been added respecting it in the New Testament.

We make these remarks, however, not because we fear to canvass the subject in the light of the New Testament. Our object is to maintain the place we have already gained in this argument, not to lose the weight of any consideration hitherto advanced, and to stand by the assertion of right principles in the interpretation of the word of God. With this understanding, we now proceed to inquire what may be expected under Christianity, and what development of its views in the grand opening scene of that economy? At once, then, it must be

felt by all that we are not to expect any retrograde movement here. We are not prepared to find that the gospel of Christ will ask less than the law of Moses in the matter of contribution to the cause of God. Rather would we expect to hear in relation to it what is said of another duty: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." Love had always been a duty, and always was taught and required. Yet it is denominated a new commandment. It is new in one sense, although not in another. It is new in the reasons by which it is enforced in the gospel, and in the measure in which it ought to be exercised. But it is not new as though it became a duty now, while it had not been such before. Just so with the subject in hand. It might be said of it in the same sense, "A new commandment give I unto you." Moses taught the duty of giving, but Jesus Christ taught it more fully still. There are reasons for it now which never existed before, and it ought to be exercised in a degree far exceeding the measure of former times. The light which Christianity pours into the mind on the great questions of time and eternity, requires that we should put forth efforts and make sacrifices to render time subservient to

the interests of eternity, such as never were made before. The views which the gospel gives of the comparative value of the body and the soul should inspire an earnestness and self-denial in the salvation of souls, which could not have been expected under darker dispensations. The obligations under which Christians have been laid to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith, should rouse to doing and suffering in his cause altogether new in the earth. His life and death are an argument which should tell on the heart as none ever told before. His honor should be an object for the promotion of which all his followers should feel they could never do enough. His command should come upon them with a power which they would feel it to be impossible to withstand. He died for us, and we should live to him. He gave himself for us, and what shall we withhold from him? What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? This is Christianity. What saith it on the giving of our substance to the Lord? Shall its claims be supposed less than those of the law? If Abraham gave a tenth, and Jacob a tenth, and Moses required a tenth, or a fifth, or a third, what saith the gospel of Jesus? The very manner of its claim should

give it an increased power over us. It does not say, in so many words, a tenth, or a fifth, or a third, or any prescribed proportion; it does assume that its early lessons on these subjects, delivered under former dispensations, are in the hands of all who now profess its higher and clearer revelations; but this assumed, it leaves it to the Christian heart to decide the proportion of its contribution. It is not indifferent whether this shall be greater or less than it was of old. It is jealous of its own honor. If there be a falling back even to the calculations of the law, the gospel is treated injuriously. If there be satisfaction of mind with the old truth, and if it is felt that when this is given we have come up to the mark of duty, and need go no further, Christ holds himself dishonored. But suppose even this to be withheld, suppose an argument constructed out of the very generosity of Christianity, that we need not give anything, or that we may give less now than they did in the old times, how must such a spirit be regarded by our divine Redeemer? Are we to wonder if he shall address to such the withering words, "Thou wicked and slothful servant?" Christ has not reduced his claims, although he makes no bargain with his followers. He expects

that we shall say, "The love of Christ constraineth us." And he says by his apostle, "Every man, as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give ; not grudgingly nor of necessity : for God loveth a cheerful giver."

With these general principles in view, let us look at the transactions of the day of Pentecost, as illustrative of the generous spirit which the gospel inspires. It was a day of great expectation. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." They had been encouraged to expect singular blessings, they had waited earnestly in prayer on God that these might be dispensed, and now they were met to receive them. It was a day of the Spirit's power. This is what was promised and what they obtained. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." These emblems of the Spirit were fitted to give the apostles just ideas of his power. Who can withstand the rushing mighty wind or

the devouring flame? So under their ministry sinners would not be able to withstand the Spirit by which they should speak. It was therefore a day of powerful impressions. As the apostles preached Christ, told of his life and death and resurrection, the hearts of the audience were smitten. Deeply convinced of sin, they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But they were enlightened by the same power that convicted them. They saw and owned themselves the murderers of the innocent Jesus, but in his blood which they had shed they saw a fountain opened that cleanseth from all sin. Into that fountain they went by faith, and were made clean. Nobly they avowed their convictions. "They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." And now look at this redeemed company. What distinguished them? "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." It was no mere momentary excitement. It was a thorough, a sound, and proved to be a permanent work of the Spirit. But there was one feature of their case and character which here deserves our particular attention,

as directly bearing on our great subject. "All that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." An extravagant and foolish impression has been taken up with regard to this transaction. It has been assumed that all the property which the disciples possessed they sold, and cast the produce into a common purse, that individual property ceased to be held, and that in the widest sense there was a community of goods. No such views are given in the passage. The meaning is, that the disciples did what the urgency of the occasion required. Those who possessed property sold what was necessary to meet the emergency of their circumstances. There was no force on any believer to do so; each did as his generosity stimulated him. This is plain from the words of Peter, subsequently addressed to Ananias: "While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" It was a proceeding every way worthy of the first disciples,—decided, vigorous, self-denying, yet calm and full of purpose. Thus viewed it presents the duty of religious contribution, as connected with the gospel of Christ, in a most instruc-

tive and impressive aspect. It represents it as the fruit of the Spirit. Wherever the Holy Ghost takes possession of the mind, he enlightens and enlarges it. He gives just apprehension of duty, and stimulates the mind to a proper frame for the discharge of it. Especially does this transaction show us what was to be expected under the new dispensation. Thus it opened, and thus it was to progress. O! why have not scenes like these been frequent or constant? The Spirit has been grieved. The body of a cold profession has been left, but the warm spirit of the gospel has been driven away. The kingdom of God is among us in word, but not in power. How cheering to contemplate this scene with which the gospel economy opened! The selfishness of the human heart was overborne. Love took possession of the minds of the disciples. Zeal for their Master's cause and honor inflamed them. Theirs was a spirit equal to the occasion to which God had called them. And it was to themselves a blessed season. "Continuing dayly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the

Church dayly such as should be saved." When we do our duty and act faithfully, we have our reward. These disciples enjoyed it in their own bosom richly, and in the prosperity that attended the cause that was dearer to them than life. Nor let us omit to notice the fearful confirmation which very soon after was given to these views of this blessed day. "A certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The sequel is well known. The judgment of the Lord fell upon them, and the deceitful husband and the consenting wife were speedily laid in one dishonored grave. Their sin was deception and falsehood, proceeding from pride and worldliness. They need not have sold their property. Probably no one had asked them. But they wished to have the glory, and yet indulge their selfishness. It is a fearful reproof of a parsimonious spirit in the things of God and religion. It

was a faithful warning of what might be expected from sinful men, yet no less a distinct intimation of what the gospel deserved and demanded.

Thus Christianity opened, and now we apply the argument. What are we to expect from those who yield themselves up to the dominion of Christ? In the light and under the impression of the day of Pentecost let the answer be given. Has Christianity reduced its demands on the generosity of its disciples? Are they expected to give more or less to the cause of God than did Abraham, Jacob, and Moses? If a tenth was the least under former economies, shall that suffice now? Shame would not permit us to say it ought. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are his." And if this is the demand upon us, what of our property? Let the parable of the talents, spoken by Jesus himself, answer the question. He who received five talents made them ten for his master; he who had two, by trading made them four; and he who had one hid it, and neither wasted nor employed it—he returned it as he had received it. The first two were approved and rewarded, but to the third it was said, "Thou wicked

and slothful servant, thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." And this was the sentence passed upon him—"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Let it be observed, this man is called "wicked and slothful," and yet the amount of sin charged upon him is simply neglect to be diligent in the cause of God. How, then, in the judgment of Christ, must it be with the man who neglects to give to the promotion of his cause? The answer may easily be given. Nor is it easier than it is to determine what are the relative claims of the law and of the gospel. If the law, by express statute, demanded a tenth, what does Christianity, without a statute, demand? It has certainly not abrogated the law of the ancient economy, but it has powerfully inspirited it. It were a slander on the gospel to suppose it lowers the claims of Christ and his cause. No, no; it elevates and enlarges

them, and like itself it raises all who truly receive and consistently obey it to a high, holy, and honorable standing before God and men, where, with the cross full in view, they ask, What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?

CHAPTER VI.

MACEDONIA AND CORINTH.

The grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.—2 Cor viii, 1.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.—2 Cor. ix, 15.

THUS begins and ends a statement of principles, and an argument founded upon them, illustrating and enforcing the duty of giving to the Lord, which, if accepted and acted upon by the Church of Jesus Christ, would issue speedily in filling the earth with the fruits of righteousness. It may be said, when we set forth the transactions of the day of Pentecost, That was a peculiar season, a time of excitement and powerful impulse; but it did not continue, and could not be expected to continue, and does not apply to ordinary times and persons. Without at all admitting that this is a proper statement, we do not stop to dispute it, but we proceed at once to a case neither extraordinary nor exciting. We claim attention to the Apostle Paul sitting calmly to dictate what the Spirit desired him to write, coolly narrating what was done by one Church, and drawing reasons from it to regulate the conduct of an-

other. We will also present his account of the matter in a way the most remote possible from that which is fitted to produce any excitement. We will apply ourselves to a plain and simple exposition of what he said, doing little more than fixing attention on verse after verse, allowing it to speak for itself, and offering a few explanations which none can dispute. Only let it be remembered, as we do so, that we are using the language, and employing the arguments, of the Holy Spirit of God, and which he intended to form the faith and regulate the conduct of Christian Churches, till the final consummation of all things.

MACEDONIA,—2 CORINTHIANS viii, 1-5.

Ver. 1. "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit [we call on you to witness while we inform you of] the grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia."

He invites them to admire what had taken place in them. He ascribes it entirely to the gracious operation of the Spirit of God. They would themselves have been the first to exclaim, "Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." Still it is not to be overlooked that the Divine Spirit does make his servants objects of admiration.

He beautifies them with his salvation. He puts his own image upon them, and he makes them beautiful through his comeliness. Nor is it wrong, it would seem, to notice and express our admiration of the Christian loveliness. Great care, it is true, should be taken in speaking of it to themselves, lest it should become a temptation to pride. Circumstances, however, may arise when it is both lawful and proper, for the sake of encouragement, to do even that. But, whether or not we may speak of it to others, for there is here the example of an apostle, and that too in the most public manner, not merely spoken, but published and handed down from generation to generation, so that, as in the case of Mary, it may be said, "Wherever the gospel of the kingdom is preached, there it is told for a memorial of them."

Ver. 2. "How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality."

This is the special grace which was so estimable in the judgment of the apostle and of the Spirit by which he spake, and which he calls upon the Corinthians, and all others, to admire. The grace itself is beautiful, liberality in the service of the Lord. It is a fruit of the

Spirit. It is a triumph over the selfishness of the human heart. It spreads happiness as far as it goes. It assimilates its subject to God, who delights in doing good. And it is a noble testimony to the power and grace of the gospel. In the circumstances of those who exercised it, however, it was greatly enhanced. It was in the midst of deep poverty and affliction; yet it abounded, and that joyfully. Their own affliction might have swallowed up their sympathies, their poverty might have been a ready excuse for neglect; but no, in spite of all obstacles, the gracious affection of love for others burst out. It urged its way through every obstruction, overcame all difficulties, and triumphed in alleviating distress and promoting happiness. The grace was every way worthy of admiration.

•Ver. 3. "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves."

Their charity was spontaneous, vigorous, and efficient; like the living well, the waters came of their own accord. It reminds us of the words of Jesus, "The water that I shall give shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Grace is exhaustless, because it is supplied by the infinite Spirit. The disposition is strengthened

by exercise. And like the source, so are the streams that flow from it. They go gushing out in strong and rapid movement. They are not as those who say, "Be ye warmed and filled, nevertheless they give them not those things which are needful to the body." The warm heart puts forth the ready hand, and the generous spirit opens it wide to dispense its gifts. It knows the luxury of doing good, and only follows the propensity of its renewed nature.

Ver. 4. "Praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

What a scene! The giving and receiving of the rich and poor a means of Christian fellowship, and an inspired apostle the medium of maintaining it! All the entreaty is on the side of the rich, that they may be permitted to give; and they ask the good offices of the apostle, that they may be indulged in charity. Compare that scene of apostolic times with the poor-laws, and the distributions, and the distributors of our day. Where is our religion? or is the real spirit of it, as manifested of old, to be found on earth? We speak of apostolic Churches and apostolic practices. Here they are. Are our Churches

and practices like these? So far as they are, they are apostolic; so far as they are not, they are not apostolic.

Ver. 5. "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God."

They far exceeded all the expectations and hopes which the apostle had formed and cherished. But he reveals the secret of all. They had given themselves to God, and what then would they withhold from him or his people? And this, alas! reveals another secret. It makes an awful disclosure which it may be unpleasant to divulge. It teaches the reason of the want of liberality to the cause of God, even the want of religion. It traces the closed hand to the shut heart. It brings us to the foundation of things. And as we cannot expect to raise a superstructure where there has been no foundation, so we need not look for doings of liberality where there is not a renewed heart. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "Can the fig-tree bear olive-berries? either a vine figs?"

Such, as described by the pen of inspiration, were the Churches of Macedonia. They were the first Churches in Europe. The apostle was called there in a vision by the

cry, "Come over and help us." He found, when he went, that the Lord had work for him to do. There he saw the gospel entering the heart of Lydia, like the sun rising gently and gradually, and pouring its light into a darkened world. And there he saw its conflict with the hard-hearted jailer of Philippi, and force from him the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" The Church in other times was worthy of its origin. It maintained its high character years after, when the apostle wrote of it and held it up as an example to others. How many Churches are like it? How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed! Yet the obligation to imitate it still remains, as we shall now see, by considering the apostle's exhortation, founded on what he had said to the Church of Christ at Corinth.

CORINTH.—2 CORINTHIANS viii. 6-9; ix. 6-8, 12-15.

Ver. 6. "Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also."

What he had seen at Macedonia he desired to see at Corinth. God, he knew, had all hearts in his hand, and could and would do again and elsewhere as he had done before. Nothing but the advancing power of

the gospel will satisfy a mind rightly disposed toward God. The subjection of the earth to Jesus is the object at which he aims. But means must be used to gain the end. On this occasion the ministry of Titus was employed. It is a legitimate work to occupy the attention and labors of a minister of Christ, when he sets himself to produce and cherish in the people of his charge an enlarged liberality in the service of God. And when any success is obtained, that should be accounted an encouragement to persevere. Where we have begun to do good we should not rest till we finish the work.

Ver. 7. "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."

The possession of some graces should never be esteemed an apology for the want of others. Rather should the deficiency be regarded as more inexcusable and inconsistent for that reason. Particularly it is most carefully to be avoided, that while some other graces are apparent that of liberality should be wanting. If a man be very zealous and stringent for holding the faith of the gospel in purity, if he be eloquent in its advocacy

and defense, if he be possessed of clear and enlarged views, if he be active in many external duties, if he show a great interest in the ministers of religion, and yet, after all, be deficient in liberality, it is a sad spectacle. The world see it and understand it. It brings the gospel into disrepute; it causes the way of truth to be evil spoken of; it is the very circumstance which will be most readily seized upon to disparage true religion. And, therefore, while we do not fail to possess and cultivate other graces, we should be specially careful to exercise that of generosity in the cause of God.

Ver. 8. "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."

After all, let it not be supposed the apostle was dictatorial. What he said was in love and zeal, and he could not help it. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It was in his mind, and it would have been as a fire in his bones if he had not given vent to it. And there was some excuse for him. Others urged him, both by their example and their words. He wished also to have the same regard for the Corinthians as for others, such as the Macedonians, and the same reasons for it.

He longed to see the sincerity of their love tested and proved. And when he did see it, it would contribute alike to their credit and his gratification.

Ver. 9. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Ah, yes! This motive would justify all his earnestness, and might stimulate all their love. Who could resist it, or how? They were not ignorant of it. They knew it theoretically, and had in some measure felt it experimentally. What was it? They knew that Jesus had been rich—that he had dwelt in the glory of the Father in the highest heavens. They knew that he had become poor—so much so as not to have where to lay his head, and to suffer as a common malefactor on the cross. They knew that to all this he submitted on their account,—that they might be rich in the pardon of sin, the gifts of righteousness, the blessedness of true religion here and its everlasting joys hereafter. And if they knew and confessed all this, what might be expected of them? What would they do in the cause of this Divine Master? What would they give for its advancement? What would

they withhold? Surely such an appeal was irresistible.

Having made it, he explained to them at length some arrangements he had made for carrying forward the particular exercise of liberality then required of them to maturity. And having done so sufficiently for his purpose, he proceeded to urge certain motives upon them, which it is important to notice as a specimen of apostolic dealing with a question of contribution to the cause of God.

Chap. ix, 6. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

This is reasonable. As it is in nature so also may we expect to find it in grace. He who does little good may expect to receive little. And this is applicable as well to time as to eternity. God has so ordered it, that in the very exercise of serving others we best serve ourselves. There is a providence, too, which goes by the rule, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." And it is the plain testimony of the divine word that men shall be judged, if not by, yet "according to, their works." It must in the nature of the case be so, for just as by exercise the capacity for happiness is

enlarged, so shall the measure of final enjoyment be.

Ver. 7. "Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

We should be at pains with the state of our hearts. We should not be satisfied merely with the doing of the generous act,—we should see that it is done in the right spirit. And this may be obtained by indulging such considerations as the apostle had suggested. Let them keep "looking unto Jesus," and the fire will burn within them. Besides, the doing of the acts of generosity has a tendency to improve the heart. Christ said, "If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Right performances would clear the intellect and promote knowledge. It would teach experimentally. And so here also the right occupation of the hands would extend its influence to the heart, and deeds of charity would promote a spirit of love.

Ver. 8. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

It was not merely the natural effect of

such a course as he had recommended they were to consider. There was, besides this, the promised and direct influence of the divine blessing. What could not God do with their hearts? What would he not do? What had he not done with many? He was able and willing, and they had only to ask and receive a right hearty and generous spirit from him. O how little this is remembered! How few remember to ask God for liberality of soul, and how feebly! Yet, be it not forgotten, the want of it is a sore calamity, the possession of it is an unspeakable blessing, and from God only can it come, and out of his fullness it may constantly be received.

Ver. 11-14. "Which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.—They glorify God for your liberal distribution, and long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you."

They benefited not merely themselves and their fellow-creatures, but they brought glory to God in the highest. They acted on the exhortation, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." And what effect ought such a thought to have on a generous heart? To be permitted to honor God!—what an honor! The very

act of liberality itself honors him. It honors his grace which prompted it, and thus its effects increase his glory. They who participate in the kindness expressed are benefited, not only in the improvement of their outward circumstances, but in the state of their minds toward God and toward man. There is thus no limit to the widening circle of a generous liberality. As the pebble dropped into the lake puts its waters into motion, and circle rises after circle, till all is stirred, and the whole borders around are bathed by the waters; so a Christian deed may prove the means of an excitement which shall grow and increase from person to person, and from place to place, and from age to age, until it shall reach eternity itself, and encircle the throne of God with a halo of glory.

Ver. 15. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

No wonder the apostle should thus close his exhortation. He calls the grace of liberality an "unspeakable gift," for which he gives God thanks. And so it is, and so he ought to do. It is unspeakably good in its nature and effects. It is lamentable that it is so little contemplated under this aspect. How many quote the apostle's words, and

yet do not apply them to his subject! Their modes of thinking are not like his; they have not the elevated views of gracious affections which he had. He calls charity an unspeakable gift, and until the same views prevail more generally the Christian Church can never be expected to do its duty in the devotion of its property to God. O that men might so see this grace as to be impelled to cry out, both on account of its own lovely character, and the extent to which they behold it exercised, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

Well, then, if these be the principles which the Apostle Paul inculcated on the subject of religious contribution, what say we to the special question which they were introduced to illustrate? What testimony do Macedonia and Corinth bear to the proportion in which Christians should contribute to the cause of God? Would they say a tenth? Did this suffice for them or the apostle their teacher? They were all familiar with the laws and customs of ancient times. Although none of these persons had been Jews, and the members of both Macedonia and Corinth were either generally or exclusively Gentiles, and even Lydia seems to have been a proselyte, yet they would

have learned from the Jewish Scriptures, and the Jews scattered among them, what had been the habits and practices of the ancient people of God. They knew well what God had required in the Jewish Scriptures. And now, when they came to interpret these passages by the principles which Paul had inculcated upon them, at what conclusion would they arrive? If we were told some gave a tenth, others less, others nothing, what opinion would we form or express of those Churches? We would be ashamed of them. We would say they were utterly unworthy of their high privileges and honored teachers. We could not help pronouncing upon them the severest censure. Then let us beware lest it be said to us, "Thou art the man;" "Physician, heal thyself;" "Thou that teachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" Let us not expose ourselves to a retort so fearful. We see what are the great principles of the apostle, and by what motives he urged them on the early Church. Let us remember in speaking to them, he being dead yet speaketh to us. Let us adopt his principles and act upon

them; let us become distinguished by liberality in the cause of God as we have hitherto been by the want of it. Let it no more be said, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Let his cause be ours, and under a deep and growing sense of what he did for us, let us uphold his cause till "all nations shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.—1 Cor. xvi, 2.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” It is in the Holy Scriptures these fitting words are found in perfection. Very frequently the weightiest sentiments are conveyed there in the fewest and simplest words possible. Great good is gained by this peculiarity of style. The truth so expressed is easily apprehended, easily remembered, and easily applied to practical uses. It is like the concentrated essence of the best food or medicine, in the composition of which the greatest nutrition is secured by the smallest quantity. Examples of all kinds abound. Do the Scriptures describe God? It is thus: “God is a spirit;” “God is light;” “God is love.” What a fund of thought and truth is here, which the most profound philosopher cannot fathom, and which yet the simplest child can in some degree apprehend and remember perfectly! Or do they set forth the way of a sinner’s salvation by God?

It is thus: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;" "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." In these brief sayings the leading features of the way of salvation are fully and clearly intimated. It is the same with practical duties. Every class will be found expressed in some comprehensive and short sentence. To confine ourselves to the one before us, the duty of religious contribution, the whole subject may be said to be laid down in the few terms prefixed to this chapter: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." A full development of the great principles of the duty has already been considered in the apostle's argument addressed to the Corinthians. On every one of them we might have dwelt at length, but their number and weight permitted only a cursory glance at them. Enough, however, was said to show their extent and depth. O that the members of the Christian Church would ponder them deeply,

drink into their spirit, feel their power, and obey their requirements! But we must now turn from them, and claim attention to the brief rule which has just been intimated, and which will yet be found to have the most extensive application.

1. The time of religious contribution is marked—"the first day of the week"—the Christian Sabbath. There is much significance in the fact that a time is thus divinely fixed. It assumes that the duty as a matter of obligation must be discharged at some time, and that it is well to have an appointed time for it, lest it should by any possibility, through neglect, be omitted altogether. It is too often found that what we think may be done at any time is never done. Nor is it merely that the time is fixed; the frequency of its recurrence is important to be observed. It arrives weekly. The duty is to be habitually performed. It is not a mere momentary excitement, to be spent in a strong impulse, from which we may fall back into apathy or neglect. It is a duty to be kept constantly before our attention, that as its obligations never cease, so neither shall our exertions. The tone of the prescribed rule implies that there is the utmost concern and consideration that the duty may be done

perseveringly and effectually. Above all, it should be carefully noted under what powerful impressions and motives the apostle would have our minds when we would thus habitually devote our property to God. "On the first day of the week!" What associations are connected with that day! It reminds us of Jesus, it is sacred to his memory, it is the Lord's day, it brings us into fellowship with him, and it irresistibly urges upon us, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men." It reminds us especially of his triumph. We may say, "This is the day the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it." "I will triumph in the work of thy hands." On this day our Divine Redeemer rose from the grave, "spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly." We have, therefore, vividly presented to us all the blessings which we enjoy by means of the death and resurrection of the Son of God. An appeal is made to the heart by their value and number. As we contemplate what he has done for us, we are asked, what we are ready to do for him? By the Sabbath we are further reminded of the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ. As on this day he arose and ascended, so also on it he sent the Holy Ghost. And the effu-

sion of the day of Pentecost was only an emblem and earnest of what might be expected in future years. Long after, John could say in the lonely isle of Patmos, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." So should every believer have the same experience. He needs the weekly return of the holy day, and it is expressly provided for him. His prayer should be, "Visit me with thy salvation;" and nothing less than the enjoyment of its answer should satisfy him. What, then, is to be its effect in the enlightenment and enlargement of his mind, discovering to him the duty of yielding himself and all he has to God, and engaging him heartily and earnestly to make the surrender? But it is in the ordinances of grace the Spirit is to be expected on that day, and hence arises another powerful influence under which the believer is to be prompted to act. These are wondrously adapted to both his mental and bodily constitution—the singing of God's praise, pouring out the heart in prayer, the word read and preached, the fellowship of the body and blood of Jesus, and the pronouncing of benediction in his name. How calculated are these services powerfully to impress and excite the soul to duty! They may well be anticipated, as was done by Da-

vid, saying, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil." Fresh supplies of the grace of the Spirit are needed and expected in the ordinances of God's house. And, to sum up all, the rest of the Sabbath is the emblem of heaven itself. Heaven is only an unbroken Sabbath—unbroken by worldly cares or sins, unbroken by any limitation of times or seasons. We are reminded how short our time on earth is, and how long the eternity on which we are about to enter. In the same manner we learn the necessity of redeeming the time now, and doing something that will tell upon eternity for the well-being of ourselves and others. This is the time which the apostle has fixed for religious contribution. And is it not manifest he did so with good reason? He has chosen the time when the mind is under the best and most powerful influences, the period at which the duty bids fairest to be best discharged, when if ever it shall not be neglected, and when every temptation to neglect is most likely to be resisted and overcome.

Attention is specially requested to this view of the subject. In almost no instance is the apostolic rule, in this matter, obeyed. In a large proportion of the Churches of these lands no religious contribution is made

on the first day of the week. In many, a half-penny or penny may statedly be given. But as to meeting the spirit or the letter of the apostolic rule, where shall we find it? Personal enjoyment and profit seem to be the grand absorbing objects of attendance upon public worship. We go to receive good, and forget the apostle has also taught us we should no less go to do good. "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." It is to be feared we are in no readiness to act upon this apostolic rule. The Church that would earnestly call upon its members to do so would be apt to endanger its peace or outward prosperity. Its habitual calls to generosity would be felt to be irksome, and there would be rebellion against them. Let us alone, and let us have the undisturbed enjoyment of the word and ordinance, would, it is feared, be the saying of many. Yet this is a great mistake. Never do we find a Scripture rule either unwise or unsuited to our highest benefit. It is in doing good we obtain good. If the Churches of Christ would only consent to act on the apostolic rule, they would speedily experience the advantages in their own edification. Only suppose that their members did, as the apostle

recommends, exercise frugality and care throughout the week, that they might be prepared to present their offerings to the Lord and his cause on every first day of the week, and what rich enjoyment would they soon experience in their own souls! God would meet them, and shower his blessings upon them. They would soon have the aspect of a garden which the Lord himself had watered. And they would be constrained often to cry out, "God is in this place; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." There is one practice in particular to which we cannot but advert for a moment, in connection with this view of the subject. It is the custom of most Churches to sustain their Christian efforts by occasional addresses and collections on days specially appointed for the purpose. For these all preparation is made. Notices are previously given of the intended appeal, and the object of it. Information is circulated to arrest attention, and stimulate zeal. When the set-day arrives, the preacher puts forth his utmost power to rouse the assembled Church to a sense and performance of its duty. And on the success of this attempt the cause in question is dependent for a year to come. It is cause of thankfulness that

even this much is gained. Not long ago nothing of the kind existed. Churches met and parted, and thought not of any duty they were called on to discharge for the benefit of others. It is hoped there will be a growing spirit of earnest zeal, and that nothing shall be left undone which wise and prudent measures can obtain for the upholding of the cause of Christ on earth. As matters are, ministers must thus statedly preach, they must go forth from time to time, and place to place; they must circulate information, and try to call forth zeal; they must devise expedients, and use all their sanctified ingenuity to raise the funds that are required for carrying the truth of Christ and its messengers through the whole earth.

All this, it is admitted, must, in the present state of the Church, be done. None, we trust, will misunderstand our remarks, nor turn them into an excuse for the neglect of present duty. After all, however, may we not say, "I show unto you a more excellent way?" And what is it? many will say. They feel that the present plan is inefficient, and does not reach the necessities of the case. Our most important plans for the evangelization of the world are languishing for the want of support. Can you point out a way

to fill the exhausted treasury? Yes, and a simple one too—a way simpler and easier far than that which is at present pursued, and as much more efficient as it is easier and simpler. It is just to return to the apostolic counsel, “On the first day of the week” give your substance to the cause of God. It is obvious he means, not as we seem to have understood it, a special day selected now and again, but every “first day of the week.” Wherever the Church of Christ assembles on that day, let its members give what their painstaking has enabled them to provide for the cause of God. Observe how an operation so simple would tell advantageously on the finances of the Church. It would set us free from the disaster which a day of stormy rain and tempest must inflict upon the cause which had its advocacy confined to that special season. With what dismay have the managers of many a noble cause looked out on such a day, as they felt the responsibility that rested upon them to meet the necessities of those who bore its toils and conducted its labors. It has been stated that the character of the appointed day determined in some instances whether the effort made over the Churches of a certain district would raise the cause to a posi-

tion of safety and prosperity for the coming year, or leave it to struggle as best it might with the difficulties of poverty until Providence might be pleased to favor it, in some future day, with a season of calm and sunshine. Is it a wise or proper arrangement that leaves an important cause dependent upon such a circumstance? The apostolic rule would remove the difficulty, and it would do more and better still. It would bring the claims of God's cause before all the members of the Church. On those special occasions which we have fixed many may not be present. Either they must have zeal to remedy the loss of their presence by a voluntary donation of their generosity, or their help must be lost until another distant opportunity shall be granted. And then the same disappointment may arise again. The stated and habitual offering at once remedies this evil. At the same time its amount of contribution would be a mighty increase on the present forced collection. A penny every week would seem a trifle to many who would scruple to present the shillings to which it would rise at the termination of the year. A shilling would be an easy weekly offering to some who would be alarmed by the idea of laying fifty-two to-

gether on the plate of solicitation after the financial year had come to a close. Even the more extended offering of the pound, or more, would not seem extravagant to some who would feel a strong temptation to curtail the donation of not a few when they were to be presented in a single offering. The finance of the Scriptures will be found as wise and efficient as it is simple. It is the best by far to meet the temptations to which human nature, in the frailty of its best estate, is liable, and by the easiest means to secure the best results. And is it nothing to substitute the calm doings of principle for the stimulus of occasional excitement? We should look well to our motives. God searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. Pride and vain-glory are besetting sins of men. They are in all circumstances evil, chiefly so when allowed to influence in the cause of God. We should be careful not only to do what is right in itself, but to do it in the right spirit and manner. And that the change of measures suggested would be calculated to have a favorable influence in this respect who can doubt? It may be added that the very habit of looking to our affairs habitually throughout the week, that we

may have to give to the cause of God on the approaching Sabbath, and that we may know what we ought to give consistently with other claims, would greatly minister to a proper frame of mind. It would be a most valuable and habitual discipline of the soul. It would bring God into the most ordinary concerns of life, and elevate the lowest engagements to the dignity of the highest principles. Let it not be said, such a habit would lay upon us a yoke of intolerable bondage. Recollect it is God who has laid it on. The rule we are recommending is divine. It is also both wise and mercifully adapted to its purposes, and not less so to the happiness and prosperity of him who acts upon it. Alas that the Churches of Christ should be so little in a condition to adopt such a rule! We are far from violently forcing it on any. We fear great changes must come before it will be generally adopted. But one day, no doubt, it will be the rule and the practice of the Lord's people. Let those who can, begin to act upon it now. Let those who cannot overcome the difficulties in their way, pray and wait till God shall make the path plain before them. But in this as in all things let us feel assured it is well to say—"O that my

ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

2. Not merely, however, does the apostolic rule determine the time of contributing, it fixes attention also upon those whose duty it is to contribute—"Every one of you." Who are meant? In some sense it may no doubt be said all men are comprehended in the description. Whoever they are for whom the blessings of the gospel are intended, they certainly should acknowledge the obligation here laid upon them. We proceed on the general ground, which none will dispute, that the gospel is to be preached to all men, and that all are invited to participate in its benefits. None will be so infatuated as to exclude themselves from the number of those who are invited and entreated to believe on Jesus Christ, and obtain eternal life in him. Then must all such own that they are included in the "every one" of the rule. For if the gospel is preached to them, and they may enjoy its benefits, surely it becomes their duty to give of their substance that these same privileges may be extended to others. Let it not be said, there can be no obligation on any to extend the gospel until they themselves become recipients of

the gospel and its salvation. This involves a most fatal principle in morals. A man's unfitness for a duty, or his indisposedness for it, does not release him from the obligation of it. So, because a man does not receive the gospel, it does not follow that it is not his duty to receive it. He is bound to receive it, and to discharge every duty which it requires. Until he does so, he is living in sin, and nothing can free him from the demand which his great Creator has laid upon him. These remarks apply directly to the special duty which we are enforcing. It is the duty of "every one" to receive the gospel himself, and to send it to others, and to do whatever he can to advance this object. We have no hesitation in saying this is the duty of a deist, or even of an atheist, if such is to be found. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men,"—this is the address of Christ in his word. And whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, here are their privileges, and duties, and responsibilities. Literally and universally, therefore, it is the duty of "every one" to consider and contrive that he may have to give of his substance "on the first day of the week." Nor let it be overlooked, that whoever fails in this duty is so far hardening

his own heart and shutting it up more and more against the reception of Christ and his truth into it. It is with this sin as with every sin. All sin is not only evil in itself, but is exerting an influence for greater evil over every mind that is subjected to it. And this is a fearful consideration. The ungodly are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." On this principle we deem it an object worthy of all zeal and effort to hinder an ungodly man from contracting more sin. Even though he become not a subject of God's converting grace, it is of high moment to keep him back from any sin, or to engage him in the performance of any duty. Often the very performance of a duty is the beginning of a state of mind that leads to the most gracious and blessed results. One thing is clear, it was a marked feature in our Lord's ministry to engage "every one" in well-doing. His sermon on the mount is a noble illustration of it. "Then came publicans also to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do

violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." Proceeding on this high authority, we call upon "every one" to give unto the Lord. O that we could engage even an ungodly and careless community in this duty ! It would soon produce a wondrous change on their spirit, and habits, and practices. Caring for others, they would begin to care for themselves. This would bring them to God, and, sensible of their own necessities, they would learn to cry mightily to him, that they might be healed of their sins. God would bless them, too. Not only in the nature and necessity of their new engagements would there arise a cessation from much that was evil, and an engagement in that which was in itself good, but the Lord would look favorably upon them ; not, certainly, because they thus entered upon a course of reformation, yet in the way of entering on such a course. We are urgent in the assertion of these principles, because we think they have been sadly perverted, and a secret feeling seems to have spread too generally in the minds of men that because they do not profess religion, its duties cannot be expected nor are they required of them. It is a fearful delusion, by which Satan has slain his

thousands and tens of thousands. We have done what we could to detect and expose his design, and we now proceed to contemplate the phrase before us in its more restricted acceptation. This was no doubt in the apostle's mind when he said, "Every one *of you*." He spoke to the members of that Church which he had described as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." "Ye are washed, ye are justified, ye are sanctified; in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." They were called upon, therefore, by a regard to their own consistency and profession, to be liberal in the cause of God. They had declared by their conduct that they acquiesced in the sentiment of Christ, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" They must therefore do what in them lay to show their value for the souls of men, and make every sacrifice to save them. Even although the special duty required of them was to contribute to the temporal relief of the saints at Jerusalem, yet there was much that was spiritual in the duty. Their temporal state powerfully affected their mental exercises. It was as the saints of God, having claims upon them as part of the Chris-

tian brotherhood, they were required to provide for them. And they were under the necessity of doing it out of regard to Jesus Christ, their Master, and that of the objects of their sympathy too—regard to his example, authority, and the solemn anticipations of the final judgment which he had so minutely described in his ministry on the earth, and in which description he gave so much prominence to what was done for his disciples in his name: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” The duty, therefore, was to all intents and purposes one highly spiritual in its character, as much so as if its direct object had been the saving of the souls of them for whom they were concerned. Then, again, they had by their conduct acknowledged the fullness and sufficiency of Christ for the salvation of their own souls. They had committed themselves into his hands, and this was the highest testimony they could give to others how highly they prized him. If they were sincere herein, what would they do to lead others to do as they had done themselves? How paltry would any earthly sacrifice seem in comparison with the high and holy object which they sought to gain! Not only had

they made their confession by the act of embracing the Saviour for themselves in faith, but they were accustomed to avow that faith in the most public and emphatic manner. Their Sabbath assemblies and their holy communion in bread and wine at the table of the Lord were known and read of all men. In all consistency, then, what service might be demanded at their hands? Surely "every one" of them would own and act on his obligation to give to the utmost for the temporal, spiritual, and eternal well-being of others. These remarks are as applicable to the members of the Christian Church now as they ever were to those whom the apostle immediately addressed. Christians make the same professions now as ever were made in apostolic times. It is the profession of a "common salvation." They have their assemblies now, as of old—the same solemnities—the same table of the Lord. The same obligations, therefore, rest upon them. On "every one" who professes Christ is laid the obligation to do what he can for the spread of his truth. And is there any "one" who could not do something? Is there "one" who could not give something? God knoweth, and it were presumption in us to speak peremptorily; but if there be "one" who could not give

something for Jesus, who gave himself for him, his circumstances must be very peculiar. Yet how many there are who act as if such were their case! They give nothing. It is idle to inquire into the various reasons which would be alleged for the neglect, but the fact cannot be questioned. Many, very many, do not give at all. The majority do not give. The smallness of contribution in the earth to the cause of Christ is a proof that few give. It may be presumed many have not been told of their obligation to do so. To others it has not occurred. It is a prevailing idea with many that all they could give is so little, it would be neither worth their offering nor the Church accepting. This is a sore evil. As well might the drops not fall because they are not each a whole shower of rain. As well might the stream let from the mountain stay its course, because it is not the broad river on which go the gallant ships. This is a matter of deep concern to the interests of religion. Personal responsibility is the great duty needed to be known and felt. If the members of the Church were brought to understand it, all would be well. If each would do what he could, there would be enough. How wise is the Spirit of God! How apparent is that

wisdom in the rule of contribution which we have been considering! If it were obeyed, and "every one" would give, it would change the whole aspect of the Church and the world. The discovery of the law of gravity did not produce a greater change in the philosophy of the world than the obedience of this simple rule would produce in the moral condition of the world. The discovery of steam, with all its wondrous powers and extraordinary effects and unexpected changes, would not match the results of this one simple principle, were it only carried out into the conduct of professing Christians. We submit it to them, and call on "every one" to say whether he will accept it for his rule, or plainly and confessedly reject it from his creed. Only let "every one" know that whosoever rejects it, rejects the apostle and Him also who sent him—the Lord Jesus.

3. Lengthened, however, as our remarks have been on this apostolic rule, we have not yet done. It is, as we have said again and again, remarkable for its simplicity, and it should have required nothing to be said in either the illustration or enforcement of it. But its neglect, its almost entire oversight, has rendered it necessary that all should be said which has been now advanced and

more too. The longer a noble building has lain in ruins the more it is covered over with accumulated matter, and it needs the greater labor to remove the rubbish, and more excavation to bring the buried columns to the light of day, and replace them on their ancient foundations, until the once perfect building is restored again to its former symmetry, and beauty, and strength. So with this principle on which we have been dwelling. It appears to have been concealed from the view of the Church. Amid the dilapidations of the truth and of the Church upon the earth, the rubbish of long-established usages, and mistaken principles, and erroneous views, has covered it over so as to have put it out of sight. Much labor, therefore, is necessary to bring it out again, and let men see it in its beautiful proportion and mighty strength. We have already presented some portions of it to their notice and admiration; and now we proceed to exhibit one other feature, which will complete the description. It is the measure or proportion in which "every one" is required to give—even "as the Lord hath prospered him."

At first sight the meaning would seem to be sufficiently clear. Indeed, it would appear as if it were hardly possible to mistake

it,—that as God gives us means from week to week, so we should give in the same proportion to his cause. But there are none so blind as those who will not see. Where no obscurity exists, there are those who take pleasure in creating it. The more simple anything is, they make it the more difficult to understand. And even on this unmistakable rule questions are asked which no casuist is able to answer, and prolixities are woven out of it which it is impossible to unravel. What is meant, says one, by giving as the Lord hath prospered? Does it mean our annual income, or our whole estate? Supposing the tenth to be the proportion of giving, am I called on to give that measure of all I have, or of what God has given me within the year? The principle of explanation is manifestly contained in the rule itself. It is a proportion to be given according to the increase of the time mentioned, and in the present instance it is a week. This may be extended to other periods of time, a month or a year. Thus the text itself fixes its meaning to refer to income, and not to the amount of property possessed. It need not be said this property will affect the income, but it is by the increase of what it yields that the proportion to be given shall

be measured. In this arrangement the wisdom of the Scriptures is great. They promise to the believer worldly prosperity among other blessings. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Wealth is an unspeakable blessing in the hands of the godly. Constituted as the world is, we do not see how the cause of God is to be carried forward without the help of the rich. True, the offerings of the poor are to be highly prized. Perhaps, too, they will ever be, as they have ever been, the chief source of support to the Church of Christ. Still there are noble examples of great good effected by princely offerings from the rich. Great and gracious promises, too, are held out to this effect in the Scriptures. We rejoice, therefore, when God in his providence is pleased to prosper his people. It is good to see them growing in wealth and influence. The world shall be the better for it all. Let it not, therefore, be supposed we frown upon the wealthy, or make little of their wealth. On the contrary, we praise God on their account; and we admire the rule which is now before us, because, while it provides for the necessities of the Church, it does not interfere even

with their worldly prosperity. Understanding it thus; then, its directions are plain, and we hold them to be universally applicable.

Fixing attention, for the sake of illustration, on what we have shown to be the lowest proportion of giving ever sanctioned by the Scriptures,—a tenth,—observe the practical application. And we specify it, not because any can fail to apply the rule to themselves, but because, even where duty is clear, we need “line upon line and precept upon precept.” The income of one is fifty dollars in the year; then the claim of God is five dollars: that of another is double, and the claim upon him is double. A third has received five hundred dollars, and fifty dollars is his proportion. If it be a thousand dollars, a hundred can readily be spared. If it be many thousands, there may be as many hundreds. Plain and specific, however, as we desire to be, there are those who cannot understand the matter. How, they ask, can a man who has a large family, and only five hundred dollars a year to provide for all their wants, devote a tenth of that to the cause of God? Then, I ask, is a man having only the half of it, or less, to give none at all? Nay, I ask, How are many families supported on the fourth of it? And on less by far?

But, you say, we have a station to support which they have not. Will you plead that argument with God? The conscience that could do so must be seared as with a hot iron. If God has placed you in those circumstances, it is an intimation of his will that he would have you to live according to them. He has not relaxed his law that you might live after certain conventional rules which men have made, but which he has never sanctioned. After all, are you not satisfied with our explanations? Then we are sorry for it, but cannot help it. Only you must allow us to ask, Where lies the fault? In us, or in you? To bring this question to a test, let us entreat that you will give us your interpretation of the apostolic rule. You do not approve of ours; what, then, is your own? There are those who can reject all that others propose, but have no proposal of their own to make. Are you of that number? There is a mighty power in some to pull down, but they will never give a hand to help to build up. We must leave you, if you be such, to Him who shall judge both you and us. And we turn away to indulge the sad reflections which are forced upon us while we look at the rule which the apostle has prescribed, and compare it with the con-

duct which many evince. How few, alas! there are who are giving even according to the lowest proportion of a tenth! But, not to dwell upon this, we mourn especially how little the claim is considered that each shall give "as the Lord hath prospered him." Last year the income was increased, but the subscription is the same. The income of one is double that of another, but their donations to the cause of God are equal. In some instances the income has been growing, and the proportion of contribution has been decreasing. Years have been accumulating, and wealth has kept pace with them; but the heart has become more and more contracted, and the duty of giving less and less felt. It is a fearful proof of the depravity of human nature to find that the besetting sin of old age is covetousness. Just the opposite of what might have been expected is found to be the reality. As the world becomes less capable of affording enjoyment, it is held with greater tenacity. When men are about to leave it they cling closer to it. Be watchful. Nothing grows faster, or is harder to be dislodged from the heart, than worldliness. There may be some who feel difficulties, however, which are peculiar to their circumstances in carrying the

apostolic rule into effect. The apostle seems to write to those who are in circumstances to know what their weekly lodgment for the cause of God should be. Some such there are still—it may be many. But there are some with whom it is not so. They are unable to tell what a week, or a month, or even a year, may enable them to make a just proportion. It is to be regretted that the state of commerce does in some instances create such difficulties. When the servant of the Lord finds himself in them, he must meet them as best he can. Stretching the time over more years than one, he must strike the proportion accordingly. He knows how to do so in other transactions, and his ingenuity will not fail him here. We may safely leave him to its exercise. Only let him not forget, the rule we have been expounding does not change with the changes of this earth's occupations. It is like Him who gave it, eternal and immutable. Abraham acted on it in his day, so did Jacob. Moses enforced it by many sanctions, and Jesus Christ in his own ministry, and by that of his apostles, inculcated it again and again. However, therefore, it is to be obeyed—conformity to it is essential. If any find fault with our exposition of it, in understanding it of income,

let them extend it according to their convictions of duty. If they think it embraces all property, let them so act upon it. We shall not complain of them. Perhaps, after all, they may reap their reward in so doing. It is a blessed thing to get above the earthliness of the present world. We are in great danger of being swayed by its vain calculations. Truly we need to cry, "O Lord, open thou mine eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law." In no department is this more necessary than in those practical questions that are apt to come into contact with our selfishness and worldly prejudices. Blessed be God, however, the rule in this instance is plain. The wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err respecting it. He who runs may read. And we end with its repetition as we began, leaving it on the conscience of every man to act according to his view of what it requires. "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Noble principle this! And noble exercise where it is obeyed! The Christian keeping it ever in his eye! looking at his daily accounts in the light of it! regarding God as a claimant in all his transactions! and while just in his dealings with all men, resolved he will not "rob God."

CHAPTER VIII.

EXAMPLES.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.—Rom. xv, 4.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

As is our faith, so will be our conduct.

Hence we infer, on the other hand, that as a man's life is, so we may judge of his sentiments. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

Proceeding on this principle we may gain further information respecting the views taught in the Scriptures on the subject of religious contribution. We have only to inquire what was the conduct of those who believed them in order to ascertain what were their sentiments. Their actions are a comment on their principles. We have endeavored to make manifest that the lowest proportion of income ever given by the people of God, and sanctioned by his authority, is a tenth; and now, in confirmation and illustration of that view, we appeal to this practice. Let this be contemplated in all relations, public and private, and under all dispensations, Mosaic and Christian, and

the conclusion will be the same. It is worthy of observation, that the Spirit of God has seen good to record the doings of the Lord's people in this respect; and out of many examples we shall select a few that may be looked upon as a specimen of the rest, and very illustrative of their guiding principles. The first which we shall notice relates to the

ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE.

The record of this event is contained in Exodus xxxv, xxxvi. It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost to give us very minute details, and particularly to describe how means were obtained for the completion of such an undertaking. We shall endeavor to sketch the leading features of the interesting and instructive proceeding. The first thing that arrests attention is the proposal of Moses: "Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them; take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord." He deals reasonably and candidly with them. He assumes no authority over them, but bears to them a message from the Lord. He explains to them the will of the Lord clearly before he proceeds to ask their

concurrence and coöperation. Let this be noticed at the outset. We must never attempt to carry our measures for the cause of God by mere authority. We must be ready and careful to give a reason for our proposals. We must take care that both we and our measures are understood, and not till then are we in a condition to propose their adoption. This done, Moses at once gave them to understand the work was to be entirely voluntary: "Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord." There was to be no constraint. If any chose to avoid the work, they were at liberty to do so; if any took part in it, it must be heartily. Even though they helped by their contribution, if this were not done with sincerity and cheerfulness, the service would not be accepted by Him who looketh not so much on the outward appearance as upon the heart. Then as to what each should bring to the work, the proposal of Moses was that every one should give according to what he possessed: "Gold, silver, brass, blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, rams' skins, badgers' skins, shittim wood, oils, spices, and onyx stones." Anything offered in the right spirit would be acceptable. Every one could give something,

although no one could give everything. None would be excluded from having some part in the delightful service; God would deprive no one of such an opportunity. His providence has put something in the hands of every one, which may be employed for him. Such were the proposals of Moses, and now we are to look at their reception by the people. This was not immediate. They took time for consideration: "All the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses." How did they employ themselves? We follow them to their tents. Here is a company engaged in earnest conversation by the way on what they had heard, and every one gives his opinion freely, all approving the plan. There is a family group in affectionate fellowship, consulting what they can do to help the work forward. And yonder is an aged patriarch, alone, in prayer to God, wrestling with him, that he may give counsel to Israel in so great a work, and engage the hearts of all in it. All this augurs well. Soon, therefore, the people come to a decision, and return to Moses: "They came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whose spirit made him willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle

of the congregation." It is most engaging to notice who came, and what they brought, and how they acted. Who? "Men and women," both the sexes alike. All are concerned in the work of the Lord, and none should abstain from it. There is work for man and work for woman. Both are under deep obligations, and both should acknowledge them. The one can do what the other cannot—together the agency is complete. What did they bring? The women brought "bracelets and earrings, and rings and tablets, all jewels of gold." These would be better employed in aiding the work of the Lord than in adorning their persons. The men brought "blue and purple, and skins and wood," whatever any one possessed. How did they act? "The women did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun." "The rulers brought onyx stones, and spice, and oil." "The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring, for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses." No sooner did this heartiness in the Lord's service appear than the favor of Jehovah was manifested. He raised up fitting agents to do

the work. "Moses said, See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and he hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in all knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." "And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he and Aholiab: them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue and in purple, in scarlet and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work." Let us address ourselves to God's work in good earnest, and he will further our endeavors. "Acknowledge God in all thy ways, and he will direct thy steps." Nor was this a momentary excitement. The work went on, and the interest of the people in it continued. "They brought free offerings every morning." Having begun a good work we must persevere. So they did, and a glorious issue they obtained. "The wise men that wrought all the work came unto Moses and said, The people bring much more than enough. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make

any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing." It should not be overlooked in what circumstances this noble outburst of sanctified generosity took place. It was in the wilderness. The people were assembled there amid its wild and rugged scenery. They were dependent every day on the providence of God to supply their returning wants. They had no resources either from agriculture or commerce. No people could be under stronger temptations to keep what they had against an evil day. Yet their zeal for God overcame all their fears. Their love for his service opened their hearts, and made them willing to give whatever they possessed. And a blessed work it proved to be. That Tabernacle became the dwelling-place of Jehovah throughout many generations. There he met his people and communed with them. It was like the building of a mighty reservoir of pure water, whence streams of blessing flowed after them while they sojourned in the desert, and long also after they entered into the promised land. The transactions of that glorious day, we may be assured, were never forgotten in Israel. An impetus was then given to the cause of God that did not spend its force for

many generations. They are left on record to teach us to act in the same manner. We, as they, are invited to bear our part in the work of the Lord. We should, like them, entertain the proposal seriously and prayerfully. We ought, after their example, to acquiesce in it. We should all do so, men and women. Every one should do what he can, and give what he can. God will bless us as we do so. He will provide agents to carry forward the holy enterprise on which we set our hearts; he will bring it to a successful issue. We shall find that we have been raising a memorial the most honorable to ourselves and beneficial to men: it will endure when we have moldered into dust. In it we shall find we were blessed, and, after us, many shall find it to be a blessing. Is not such a work worthy of a generous offering? What shall it be? A tenth of our income? Read the doings of Israel and determine. They knew the law; but did they limit themselves to it on this occasion? Their conduct is the best exemplification of their principles. What think we of any Israelite who might be detected in that day keeping back from the work of the Lord? How we despise him! An Achan in the camp, he could only bring a curse on Israel.

Then let us be both admonished and encouraged liberally to give to the work of the Lord until his Tabernacle is built in the wilderness of the world, where he shall dwell, in manifest tokens of his presence, until his people are all brought up into the land of rest and promise.

THE TEMPLE.

The Tabernacle had now stood for a period of about five hundred years. It was the will of God that it should at length give place to a more permanent structure. The circumstances in which the Temple that succeeded it was erected are fully detailed. And it is worthy of note that here again, as in the case of the Tabernacle, we are presented with a noble exhibition of generosity in the cause of God. This cannot be accidental. It is the will of God, we should know, that under every economy and in every change of administration liberality in his cause marked his people. Israel at the building of the Temple presents a happy resemblance of the same Israel at the erection of the Tabernacle, and we shall now contemplate the prominent features of their conduct as narrated in the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth chapters of 1 Chronicles.

As might be expected, there is much in common with what happened at the building of the Tabernacle; but we shall endeavor to bring out mainly what is new in this example of generosity.

The objects were in some respects similar, but in others different. One great end was to be served by both, the maintenance of the worship of God among his people, a testimony to himself and his truth. But the Tabernacle was a frail and movable erection, while the Temple was a permanent and stable structure. The one was adapted to an unsettled people on a toilsome journey, the other to a state of tranquillity and national prosperity. The narrative in both cases shows that a generous spirit can live under any circumstances, in poverty and in wealth, in journeying or abiding, at home or abroad. The principle is independent of changing circumstances. At all times and in all conditions the people of the Lord are expected to be generous in his service.

As the offerings for the Tabernacle were adapted to the wilderness state of Israel and to their condition of poverty, so their services for the Temple were worthy of their advancement in civilization and prosperity. Their contributions were magnificent. They

are thus described in the discourse of Dr. Brown, formerly referred to: "The donations of David and his people astonish us by their magnitude. In addition to the immense sums which he had amassed during his reign for the building of the Temple, he, on the occasion referred to, devoted to this pious purpose what is equivalent to about *eighteen millions* of our money; and his people's joint contributions considerably exceed *thirty millions*." It is easy to pronounce these sums, but there are few who have any just apprehension of their value as they thoughtlessly read of them. They discover an amount of wealth and a largeness of heart to which in these days there is nothing to compare in the efforts of Christian benevolence. All the contributions of all the Christian Churches on the face of the earth, for all missionary purposes, fall immeasurably short of this single offering on the part of ancient Israel and their king.

It is partly to be explained by observing who they were that gave on this occasion, and in what manner they did so. Here is the narrative: "David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the cap-

tains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem." "Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly." And "the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly to the Lord, and David the king also rejoiced with great joy." The conduct of the parties was as noble as their station. Had such not borne their part in some measure commensurate to their position in society, the work could not have been accomplished. When shall such a scene be witnessed here? What aid are the rulers and wealthy men of the land giving to the spread of Christianity? Are their contributions commensurate with their position, and responsibility, and wealth? We are jealous of their consistency, and we must remind them of their accountability. Let us be borne with while we ask, What are even ministers of the gospel in affluent circumstances doing to help forward the work of the Lord by their contributions? We have heard reports of their princely

salaries ; to what are these devoted ? Are their names and subscriptions prominent in the lists of those who are trying to build up and enlarge Zion ? We bring no railing accusation, but we cannot help saying there is cause for solemn inquiry. It cannot be that the cause of God shall be neglected by the great and noble without incurring much guilt. O that America were as it was with Israel in the days of King David, when the king, and the princes, and the nobles, led the way in the work of the Lord ! Were it so, we should enjoy a measure of peace and prosperity not at present known among us. "Then should the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, would bless us."

Yet there was no extravagant excitement in the conduct of David and his nobles. The whole proceeding was marked by a spirit the most calm and considerate. It was indeed a determined one, and in such a cause it ought to be so. "I have prepared with all my might for the cause of my God," said David. He weighed the matter well, and acted with a clear and steady purpose. Yet his uprightness is most prominent. "Because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good

given to the house of my God." His affection for the work is assigned as a reason why he acted both generously and honestly. It opened his heart to give, but it taught him also that he must take care to give only that which was his own, knowing that no cause could have the Lord's blessing which was not sustained in accordance with his will and law. David and his nobles were as careful to give honestly as they were to give at all. This is a blessed example to the community. The great are not only to contribute, but to do so in a way that will command respect and approbation. It is when this is the state of a people, the rich and the poor will feel aright toward one another, and dwell in concord and common prosperity.

A beautiful example is presented on this occasion of the effect of the conduct of the great on that of the public at large. "All the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers." "The people rejoiced." The poorest had their part as well as the richest. They never imagined they were exempted from the duty, or excluded from the privilege of giving. And this is never to be forgotten. The work is to be done in common. All are to labor at it. Every one should resolve, I will have at least a stone in the

building of the Lord. I cannot do what I would, but I will do what I can.

This work ended in a way worthy of its commencement. "David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; both riches and honor come of thee; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. But who am I, or what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly, after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." It is where this spirit of piety and prayerful dependence prevails we may expect such results as these. When are we to witness or exemplify them?

With this example before us, let us judge what we are to give to the Lord, and to do for his cause. What do we think of the tenth in the light of such a transaction? Not in vain had the law of God educated this people in an enlarged liberality. There must have been long training to call forth and exercise such a spirit. It was not the product of a day. Deep principles must have got

hold of the hearts of the people, great and small. They show us what they were and what they thought. And their example of generosity ought not to be lost on the present generation. It is much needed. The Lord grant that through his blessing it may be effectual.

THE WIDOW OF SAREPTA.

It is not in one form only the examples of Scripture are presented to us. They are national and individual, public and private. We have seen what was done unitedly, let us also see what was done singly. There is some danger of being so dazzled with great and striking exhibitions of generosity on a broad scale as to cause us to forget our individual responsibility. We therefore select a special case, and that presenting as strong a contrast to what we have been considering as can well be imagined. The history to which we refer is recorded in 1 Kings xvii, 8-24. All the features of it seem to be ordered so as to teach, that there are none who may not and ought not to exercise generosity in the service of God. It was that of a woman. Often the Scriptures tell of such, that it may not be supposed they are exempted from taking part in the work of the Lord.

She was a widow. The name is the strongest association we have in our language with helplessness and dependence. What can such a one do? She was poor. "I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse." She was in the extremity of a famine. "I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Yet to her the prophet Elijah is sent in his strait that she may feed him. This circumstance is specially noticed by Christ in the New Testament: "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a woman that was a widow." It is mentioned as a distinguishing favor conferred upon her. Difficult and distressing as her circumstances were, she fell in with the proposal of the prophet to relieve his hunger. At first she hesitated, and did not see either her duty or the possibility of compliance. But a word of encouragement and explanation satisfied her, and she was resolved to try what she could do for the Lord and his servant. "She went and did according to the saying

of Elijah." And she had no cause to regret it. The Lord's blessing rested on her and rewarded her. "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by Elijah." Now, why is all this recorded? What is the purpose of this simple narrative of a lonely and destitute widow? Surely to teach us there is no one who may not do good. Surely to teach us a generous heart may dwell under a garb of the greatest poverty. Surely to teach us we should never decline a proposal to do good and relieve distress when it is in the power of our hand to do it. Surely to teach us we shall never serve the Lord or his cause in vain. Many a widow's heart has this record cheered. Very good it is in God that he gave it a place in his word. It may be as the hidden flower in the luxuriant garden. It does not at first attract us. But when we take it up and examine it, how lovely! worthy of its Author! He is infinite in wisdom and love. Let none decline some part in the Lord's work. However humble, there is a place he is to occupy, and a work he is to do. The generous heart will move the hand to activity. Remember the widow of Sarepta.

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

One other example let us just notice before concluding this part of the subject. It is recommended to us as having occurred in the ministry of Christ, having called forth his most emphatic approval, and so being distinctly illustrative of the spirit of his gospel. It is thus recorded: "Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." What a scene is here! Jesus was looking on. How little the crowds thought of this! And it is so still. His eye is upon all men, he is taking cognizance of their doings, and yet they perceive it not, think not of it, and are not influenced by it. What did he see, and what did he think and say of it? He saw the people casting their money into the treasury according to the law,

and in particular he observed that many rich persons cast in much. With this he does not find fault. The act was a proper one in itself, and whether it was acceptable or not depended on what he saw to be the spirit by which it was prompted. If it was pride or self-righteousness, it was hateful in his sight; if it was in compliance with the law, and out of regard to the authority of God and the good of men, it was accepted and approved. We are not told, however, what he thought of these rich men and their offerings. There is another person and another offering that attract and absorb his attention. And he calls the special attention of his disciples to what he observed and desired to say of it. The person was "a certain poor widow"—somebody whose name was not known there, suffering under the privations of poverty, yet casting in a farthing. And what of this? Who minds it? The poor woman and her miserable offering were perhaps in the way while some portly magnate strutted forward to deposit his princely gift. But hear the judgment of Him who shall at last judge the world. He that made the worlds, of whom it is written, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," remarks with emphasis, "This poor widow hath cast in more than

they all,"—more in the account of God, more in the way of securing his acceptance and blessing, more for the furtherance of the great end for which that treasury had been appointed. But Christ gives the explanation himself: "They all did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." What they gave they could easily spare, and feel no inconvenience; what she gave left her, in all human calculation, to want the necessities of life. Is our Lord's judgment of this case the opinion that would be entertained or expressed of it by thousands in our day? They would count such conduct the height of folly and absurdity, while He who had the treasures of wisdom and knowledge declared his admiration of it. What! God gives a poor widow a farthing, she needs it to buy bread, and yet she goes and casts it into a contribution for the spread of religion! Has the poor woman not lost her understanding? Many would think so. Well, be it remembered, Jesus thought the reverse.

There is, perhaps, no passage in the word of God that has been more perverted and abused than this simple and beautiful incident. A rich man or woman proceeds to deposit an offering to the cause of God, and

remarks, with an air of extreme humility, "I have been giving my mite to the cause." Indeed! Have you? Just inquire what is meant by a mite. We do not say that the term *mite* is synonymous with *moiety*, yet they so resemble one another as to suggest the idea of some affinity in their meaning. *Moiety* signifies the one-half of anything. If, then, *mite* be derived from it, it denotes a large share, even a half, of that which is in question. Have you then given the one-half of what you possess, or of what you ought to give? But this poor widow is not said to have cast in her mite, but two mites, two moities, two halves; that is, the whole sum which she possessed. And so our Lord explains it: "She did cast in all that she had." Let this language be laid aside, as it is commonly used. All allusion to such an incident as this is most unbecoming in those most given to the use of it. Their conduct is the very reverse of this poor widow's. They are to be classed with the rich on whom Christ looked, it is not said whether with approval or displeasure, and not with the poor widow, with whom they are not worthy to be associated. Yet this incident is a beautiful exponent of the spirit of the gospel. It shows what Christ expects in his

followers. No doubt, too, it has mightily tended to form and cherish a generous spirit in many of them. It is known to all, and many have caught his spirit expressed in it, and acted according to it. For much as there is reason to lament and to complain of the sad prevailing want of liberality in the Church of Christ, there are yet those to whom there has been given a large and noble generosity. Such there ever have been, and their number, it is hoped, is not decreasing. They have been found among rich and poor, among the laity and ecclesiastics, among the judges of the land and rulers of the people. The Honorable Sir Robert Boyle with his high intellectual attainments, Sir Matthew Hale gracing the bench of justice, Richard Baxter, Dr. Doddridge, and John Wesley, all held high views of the duty of religious contribution, and they acted upon them. Every one of these great men held the opinion that no believer in Revelation could consistently give less than a tenth of his income to the service of the Lord, and some of them went much further in both their principles and practices. Some indications have appeared of an advancing attainment in this respect in the Church of our time. All Churches are owning the ob-

ligations, and making some feeble attempt to give and to get for the spread of the gospel. Examples have appeared of large-heartedness that are a good earnest of a better state of things. It could hardly be otherwise than it is in the low views entertained by many. They have not been informed nor roused upon the subject. But the day of apathy, we trust, is gone. Many are asking for the "old paths," and soon, we hope, will be found walking in them. The spirit of Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Christ, and of his early Churches, will revive, and men will encourage one another, saying, "Who is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" The Lord hasten it in his time!

CHAPTER IX.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.—Isaiah xxviii, 10.

“GIVE a portion to seven, and also to eight: if the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” Although a curse be upon creation, by reason of man’s sin, yet it is manifestly under a law of beneficence, and it is thus proposed as a model for our imitation. Everything is contributing to the good of man. The heavenly bodies give him light; the clouds pour out their rain; the earth yields its increase, and all that is upon it; the waters teem with living creatures for his food; all things are made for his benefit. Man himself is not an exception to the rule. He has been made not merely to receive, but to do good. Fallen as he is, still this claim lies upon him. The Scriptures enforce it continually, in all places, at all times, and in all ways. Every argument that can avail with a reasonable mind is everywhere employed throughout their various revelations. We have precepts and promises, warnings and encouragements,

facts and prophecies. To consider all these with any measure of minuteness is impossible; yet it may be well to glance at them, that we may see the fullness of Scripture in the enforcement of well-doing, and from its tone and spirit learn what must be our duty, especially in the way of religious contribution.

PRECEPTS.

These pervade the whole volume. It is not easier to gather flowers in the open fields of nature than it is to find such precepts in the word of God. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they shall be alike good." "A good man showeth favor and lendeth." "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not to thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it

by thee." "To do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This is the tone of Scripture precept. What is expected of all who truly receive it? A few remarks on these passages, taken almost at random out of thousands, may be helpful to illustrate and enforce the pure and delicate principles involved in them. They assume that God is to be acknowledged in all we possess. He must be honored in such a use of it as shall show we feel it to be a gift from him, and that it is to be used for him. There is a peculiar force in the phrase, "All thine increase." Whatever is added to our income, the "first-fruits" belong to God. It is intended to keep us continually in contact with God, through the bounties of his providence. It is as if the commands were ever sounding in our ears, "Occupy till I come;" "Give an account of thy stewardship." The way in which we shall thus honor the Lord is also pointed out; it is by doing good to his creatures, expending our substance in a way that will be profitable to them. A pa-

rent feels himself obliged by all the kindness that is shown to his children ; and God is pleased to assure us he is so pleased to regard whatever is done to his creatures. Especially does a parent estimate the kindness that is shown to his child out of regard to him ; and this is a principle continually recognized in the Scriptures : " Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Not only so, if the kindness be not shown, he resents it as an injury to himself : " Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me." And it is well known of what he speaks : " I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was naked, and ye clothed me ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me." Or the reverse : " I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; I was naked, and ye clothed me not ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." It carries these solemn sayings to the highest pitch of interest and importance, when it is remembered that they are given as the proceedings of Christ in the final judgment of

the world, and are to be followed by the sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," or "Depart, ye cursed;" and in accordance therewith, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous to life eternal." There is in some of these precepts quoted a tenderness and delicacy of feeling inculcated that greatly endear and recommend them. In the matter of lending we are enjoined to be frank, candid, and gracious—not constraining the applicant to feel that we are conferring a great favor upon him, but making him to perceive that what we do is done freely, and with a sincere desire to serve him. In showing a favor to another, it is not to be done in a way that may be irksome, as if we would have it to be felt we were making a great sacrifice; it must be done cheerfully, and at once. In aiding others who may be seeking our co-operation in helping them forward in a good cause, we must give no unnecessary trouble. We are not to say to this neighbor, "Go, and come again, when we have it by us." We must respect his feelings, and time, and convenience. And while there is this spirit of considerateness and delicacy in these Scripture precepts, some of them rise to the loftiest height of the noblest principles. No

unkindness, or injustice, or cruelty, or sinfulness, or ingratitude in others, is to hinder us from doing them good. If our bitterest enemy hunger, we are to feed him. The harder the metal, the greater the heat that must be applied to fuse it. The greater the wickedness, the more the kindness that must be used to overcome it. Heap up coals of fire on his head, and melt down the hard heart of our enemy. This assuredly was the way of Christ. He acted on that principle. It is the very basis of his gospel. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." It is the most open avenue to the heart of man. If it cannot be entered thus, it cannot be entered at all. Would that it were more frequently tried! And of all forms of kindness none is more felt than the employment of our pecuniary means for the good of others. Men value money, and when they see that others use it for their benefit, it is an argument which they at once understand and powerfully feel. It strikes a chord of sympathy which vibrates through the heart, and takes the man captive in its bonds. Let it not be said, It is needless to dwell on counsels which all admit to be Scriptural and binding. All admit them, and few act on them. We are persuaded

there is much to be learned, not only in the duty of doing good, but the spirit in which it should be done; not only in the matter of giving, but the manner of it—cultivating that tenderness and delicacy of feeling which the Scriptures alone have ever fully apprehended, and rising to that loftiness of principle which they only who act upon them can attain.

WARNINGS.

Nor let it be supposed it is left optional with us whether we shall obey these precepts or not. We may disregard them; but if so, we are warned that we shall abide the consequences. These consequences are distinctly set before us, and if we expose ourselves to them we cannot plead the want of plain speaking in the word of God. Confining our attention to the single form of benevolence in pecuniary contribution, it will be well to listen to the voice of warning which the Scriptures raise in the ears of all who are not careful to practice it. The danger of covetousness is set forth with a strength of sentiment and a force of language seldom employed on other subjects. The tone in which it is spoken of betrays a sense of its evil, which, it is to be feared, few estimate; and

this renders it all the more necessary that we attend to the warnings of God's word, as though we heard the voice of Jesus saying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Solomon saith, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." This witness is true. A narrow-minded man does not usually prosper. He has not himself a heart to use the means that are necessary to success. Others take pleasure in thwarting his purposes; and the blessing of God does not rest on his basket and store. What a miserable object! The expenditure of a shilling might gain him a pound, but he cannot force himself to employ it. Proverbs usually have their foundation in truth and correct observation; and here we have an example of it. This man is known by the appellation of a miser, and the very term signifies misery. A greater than Solomon has spoken on the same subject. It was a frequent topic in the ministry of Christ. He has given a most emphatic testimony to his own estimate of wealth in the lowly position which he chose to occupy on the earth, in the companions with whom he thought proper to associate, and in the condition in which he has been pleased to place many of

his people. His own mother he left a dependent on the kindness of a disciple; and this single fact is full of meaning. But his speech was often directed to this theme; and what said he? In one place he warns—"Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." It is difficult to say which is more impressive, the counsel given here or the argument by which it is enforced. "Take heed, and beware." A double warning is given. We require to take heed, giving our utmost attention to the subject; and when we have done so, we shall find that we must stand upon our guard in the attitude of self-defense. For why? There is nothing so insidious as the love of the world and its wealth. It creeps in unperceived and unsuspected; and when once it has got a footing it is hard to be dislodged, and it assumes a mastery over the mind which appears most unaccountable and unreasonable. Hence many who, in the time of their comparative poverty, were generous, have become, in the possession of wealth, narrow and illiberal. They say, and we fear they believe, they cannot contribute to the cause for which they are solicited. Covetousness thus seems to destroy

reason as well as religion. It is no wonder, therefore, that Christ so loudly lifted up his warning voice against it. Then the reason which he assigns is in keeping with his counsel—"A man's life does not consist in the abundance which he possesseth." He may have "the abundance," but not the end for which life is given; that is, happiness. This is in strict accordance with the facts that lie all around us. Rich men are not more happy than poor men. The poor are apt to think they are, but it is a mistake; and it is often found that as a man increaseth wealth he increases sorrow. He will be delivered from this evil, certainly, if he attend to one thing; that is, if he rightly use the wealth which God has given him: but if he do not so, he will find, from bitter experience, that vain is the endeavor to extract sweetness out of gold. Our Lord does not hesitate, however, to use even stronger representations than we have been considering. To illustrate and enforce his saying he employs a parable. He describes a rich man in the height of his luxury and enjoyment till he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry." But then, reversing the scene, he introduces God saying to him, "Thou fool, this night

thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" and he draws this inference, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." No wonder that he who thus viewed the subject of ill-used wealth should say, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." He meant that a rich man, yielding to the temptation of trusting in riches, of which there is imminent danger, could no more, in that state of mind, become a subject of true religion here, or attain to its joys hereafter, than a camel, according to the Jewish proverb, could pass through the eye of a needle. The one is literally, and the other morally, impossible. We cannot help adding to the testimony of Christ the words of his illustrious apostle to the Gentiles. Paul says, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Fearful warning! Let us not fail to understand it. It has in view the man that "*will*

be rich." On this he is determined. To that he is resolved everything shall yield. He does not speak of the man whom God enriches, of him who in his providence prospers in his worldly calling, but of the man who at all hazards of character and principle is resolved to be rich if he can. Such a man he distinctly forewarns, that he will encompass himself with temptations which shall prove a snare to him, that these temptations shall provoke evil dispositions in him, that will prove to be most foolish and hurtful, that they will end in utter destruction, in all kinds of evil, cause him to abandon the true faith of the gospel, and plunge him into sorrows which shall pierce him through at last as so many poisoned and fatal darts. So speaketh the Spirit of God of the "love of money." Let men be warned. Money is good; it is cause of thankfulness when God bestows it; it is a blessed talent to employ for the good of men and the glory of God: but if it be misused it is evil in proportion to the good that it might have achieved. The best food is the most injurious to the diseased body, it is not in a capacity to profit by it; and it is the same with riches—a blessing unspeakable to those who will use them as God's commands, a curse terrible to those who misapply them.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, and so are the warnings of Scripture.

PROMISES.

We would like to see a complete collection of these brought together, and presented to our notice at a glance. The botanist takes great satisfaction in bringing together all the different species he can find of one admired plant, that he may look at their common features in connection with their minute and beautiful varieties. So also the naturalist in every department of his study. All the works of God resemble each other. As it is in his creation, so it is in his word. Sameness and variety pervade the whole. At present we shall indulge our admiration of his word in the matter of his promises, confining our attention to one class, however, those which relate to the right use of money, and so set forth vividly the advantages of liberality. Referring to a passage quoted among the precepts, Solomon having said, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and the first-fruits of all thine increase," adds, "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." The enjoyments and necessities of life shall be certain. Both are guaranteed

to every one who acts as he is commanded. And why should we doubt the truth of the promises? How easy it is in God to make them good! He can touch a spring in providence that either opens or shuts the door of our prosperity. If we are dependent on the field, his elements can either mature or destroy our property at his bidding. If commerce is our pursuit, he can restrain or stimulate our minds, or those of the men with whom we have had to do, so as to issue in our loss or gain. It is greatly to be deplored that this is not sufficiently considered. Even the Lord's people do not enough lay upon themselves the duty of remembering God and his providence in every transaction. If they did so, they would find it to contribute vastly both to their peace and their prosperity. In another place Solomon says, "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." The statement cannot be made plainer, and if any man doubt the truth of it we have no authority to plead higher than the word in which it is contained. God hath said it. David says of the righteous man, "Wealth and riches shall be in his house;" and then he proceeds to explain the graces, in the ex-

ercise of which he will be sure to meet with the promised reward, saying, "A good man showeth favor and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion." The promise is not to every good man, act as he may, wisely or foolishly, but to the good man acting generously, and at the same time as discreetly as generously. The prophet Isaiah takes up the same subject, and says, "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." God will so order it, that in serving others he will lay the foundation of his own prosperity. As the clouds pour out their water on the earth, and the very abundance with which it is given causes the vapor to ascend again and fill the clouds afresh, so "the liberal man," in doing liberal things, is creating, though without his own design, an influence that will return back again seven-fold into his own bosom. Jesus, too, has spoken on the same subject. "Seek first," he says, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." This is

the faithful and true witness. And in corroboration of his testimony, let us for a moment look at the principles inculcated upon Israel, at the period of the return from Babylon and the second building of the Temple, and the measures founded upon them. Haggai is commissioned to say, "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house." These words told upon the people: "They came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts." And the prophet was then commissioned to proclaim, "From this day I will bless you." Malachi spoke in like manner: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all na-

tions shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts." These are words of truth and soberness. They declare the unchangeable and eternal principles of the divine government. They were exemplified in the prosperity of Israel, while they acted in accordance with them. "All the promises of God are in Christ Jesus yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God." The glory of God is bound up in the fulfillment of the promises. And of these promises, as of all others, it may be said, "Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it? He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent."

PROPHECIES.

Without a glance at these, the subject would be incomplete. We cannot repress the desire to know how it shall be with the Church in future times, and God hath graciously told us. Much darkness hangs in many respects over its coming history, yet in the matter of the enlarged and generous spirit which is destined one day to prevail, the Spirit hath spoken expressly. There are passages in his word, not a few, devoted to the delineation of the latter-day glory. They seem as if they were intended to sustain the

drooping spirit of God's saints under their many difficulties and depressions. They cry, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" And he "puts a new song into their mouth, even praise unto our God." The Book of Revelation, in particular, dark as some of its intimations are, is yet clear in the representation of the ultimate issue of all things in the universal spread and triumph of the gospel. However we may fail to trace the steps by which Jesus shall go forth conquering and to conquer, yet of this there can be no doubt, that he will continue his conquests until the cry is raised, "The kingdoms of this world are the kingdoms of our God and his Christ." Now in these sublime and encouraging predictions, one feature frequently marked is the generosity by which the Lord's people shall be distinguished in the day of coming glory. And to a few of these passages it will be suitable to recur. Isaiah, treating of this very subject, largely and expressly, says, "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful." He intimates that it may be so now, but that it shall not always be so. A complete change will pass over the views and judgments of men. Many are esteemed liberal men who

would then be regarded as the personification of covetousness. See what men can give now for personal and family luxuries, and compare it with what they devote to the cause of God, and the proportion is miserable; not a tenth it may be, perhaps much less. Yet because they give at all, or sometimes give beyond what is common, or what was expected of them, their character is elevated to the idea of liberality, and men speak of them as if they were indeed generous. It shall not be so in the day to which we look forward. Men will then judge righteous judgment. A narrow inquiry will be made into means and expenditure. A faithful rule of proportion will be applied to the contribution. And character and conduct will be estimated, not by the false and deceitful rules of a covetous generation, but by the broad and eternal principles of man's relation to God, and his obligations to Christ and his cause. Another prophet opens our view still further, and tells us what men will do in those days. To David this is a frequent and delightful theme, and in one of his Psalms, expressly set to the music of the conquering Messiah's triumphs, he says, "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people shall

entreat thy favor." Tyre was the great mart of ancient commerce. This, therefore, is a prophecy that commerce shall be laid tributary at the feet of Jesus—its wealth, its enterprise, its discoveries, and its labors. Every one who looks at what is taking place in the earth must see that the destiny of the world is likely soon to be in the hands of its merchants. This is a consummation to be devoutly desired. There is no class whose influence is so great, and from whom so much may be expected. Commerce enlarges the mind beyond any other earthly employment. While riches increase by its energetic pursuit, they do not seem to take so fast a hold of the mind as when otherwise obtained. There is a readiness to give which is not found in other professions. The giving as well as the getting of money may become a habit. And there are thus even natural principles on which the greater liberality of this class of men may be explained. But above all, their enterprise, how it surprises and delights us! Whose are the railways that are now connecting kingdom with kingdom as hamlet used to be with hamlet? They have been devised and paid for by those merchants, who, we say, happily are become as princes in the earth. They are

bridging over the nations that before were far apart, and making a highway for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over. They are constructing a pathway for the missionary to all people of the earth. They may not, some of them, or even many of them, intend it, yet God is doing it by them. We cannot help applying, almost literally, to this astonishing change in the state of things, the words of the prophet: "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Commerce has thus become the John the Baptist of the present day. It is the voice crying, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Rather we should say, God is thus speaking by it. In his providence he is opening these facilities for the spread of his truth. Let us feel the obligations that are thus laid upon us, and all the more that the facilities for the spread of error and sin keep pace with those for truth and godliness. Only we have confidence in right principles. Great is the truth, and it will prevail. Better still, God has said, "The

knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea." All shall be directed and overruled to that end. So saith another prophet: "In that day shall there be upon the bells [or bridles] of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." This is the purpose which the God of the whole earth hath purposed. Blessed be his name, none can hinder or frustrate it. On everything in the Church—on everything in the world, the inscription will be written, "Holiness unto the Lord." It is his, and it is hereby dedicated to him. Our souls are his, and we write upon them "Holiness unto the Lord." Our bodies are his, and we write upon them "Holiness unto the Lord." Our children and families are his, and we write upon them "Holiness unto the Lord." Our Churches and their ordinances are his, and we write upon them "Holiness unto the Lord." Our labors are his, and we write upon them "Holiness unto the Lord." Our wealth is his, and we write upon it, in lines of deep and dura-

ble inscription, because it was so long withholden from him, but now wholly, freely, and forever rendered up to him, to his service, and cause, and glory,—

“HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.—Eccles. xii, 18.

WHAT proportion of his income should a believer in revelation dedicate to the cause of God? “Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,”—and they have answered the question. We have cited them as our only witnesses, and we have examined their testimony in detail. Desirous to know what the mind of God on the question is, and believing they were commissioned to declare it, we have consulted them one by one, and heard what each had to say. Before dismissing the subject, it may be well to cite them forward once more, and hear their united testimony. Let us consider ourselves a jury solemnly impaneled in the presence of God the Judge, adjured to give an honest verdict on the evidence to be laid before us, and to find whether any believer in the revelation they carry to us can consistently devote less than a tenth of his income to the cause of God.

ABRAHAM first claims attention, and gives

his testimony. He deposes as follows: God found me in Ur of the Chaldees, rapidly sinking with my fathers into idolatry. He called me in his sovereignty, and sanctified me by his grace. He honored me with the appellation of "the Friend of God." Deeply did I feel my obligation to him, but especially on some peculiar occasions when he interposed remarkably on my behalf, and not only preserved me and mine, but enriched me with increased substance. At such times, in token of my gratitude, I devoted the tenth of what he had given me to his immediate service. I did so because my heart prompted me to honor my benefactor; because it was right in itself, and because I knew, either from express revelation or the practice of God's people in those days, that such an offering was required, and would be accepted, by the Lord. This is the amount of my testimony, and for further information on the subject I refer you to my distinguished grandson Jacob, the younger son of my beloved Isaac.

JACOB bore willing testimony, and said: I have hearkened to the speech of my venerated forefather, and heartily acquiesce in all he has said. It is manifest from the light of nature, as well as from the law of God and

the practice of his people, that our obligation should be acknowledged to God by the dedication of some part of our property to him. My grandfather has told you what his practice was—that on every special occasion of increase to his property he gave a tenth to God. I have done the same, but I have also gone further. Early in life I was favored with a gracious revelation of the Lord, and was much moved by it. Under the impression which it made upon my mind, I engaged that of all the Lord should ever give me, I would give the tenth to him. Sometimes in the occupations of this life I forgot my vow, but God in his providence reminded me of my duty, and roused me to the performance of it. Thus I had the express approval of the Lord to my practice, and so I continued to pursue it as long as I lived. You may judge from my practice what I hold to be the principles of the divine word. Look into the law of Moses, and you will find that he bears similar testimony, and carries the claims of God further than I have done.

MOSES appeared, and presented himself with the law of God, written by his express command. He stated: Abraham and Jacob have both correctly stated how it hath been

from the beginning. A tenth is the proportion in which it has been customary to serve the Lord. But the world is grown older than it was in the days of my fathers, and its obligations to the Most High are increased. He has now given his written oracles, and in them he has embodied, in the form of law, and under the sanction of express statute, what it is his will that his people should do. A tenth is the well-known proportion that has been offered from the beginning, and therefore it is recognized in the law—but it is not merely a single tenth. There is a tenth for the support of the ministry, a tenth for the feasts and sacrifices, a tenth every third year for the poor, a tenth from every Levite for the priesthood; and, as if to render these offerings essential, the services for which they are required are perpetual; they are the most various as well as constant, and beyond all that are prescribed by law, free-will offerings are expected from every devout Israelite. The whole economy is so planned as to train the Lord's people to habits of generosity, and to overcome the natural selfishness of the human mind. The testimony which I bear, therefore, is that a tenth is the lowest proportion ever recognized; that the law goes far beyond it, even

to a fifth or a third, and that He who knew what was in man laid it as an indispensable obligation on the conscience of every man thus to honor God with his substance.

The APOSTLES followed Moses, and told how it was in their day. We were present, say they, when Christianity was ushered into the world, amid the glories of the day of Pentecost and the effusion of the Holy Ghost. We did not forget that we were Jews, and amenable to the law of Moses. We were taught that its mere ceremonies, having served their purpose, were to cease. The stars disappeared when the sun arose in the heavens. Still the eternal principles of the ancient law continued. In particular, the duty of giving to the Lord remained in full force. As our privileges were increased, the demands were advanced; and so powerfully was this felt, that, in the emergency to which the cause of Christ was then brought, the disciples felt the obligation of disposing of their worldly properties to contribute to the cause of Jesus and the maintenance of his truth. Wherefore our testimony is, that while none can give less than a tenth to God, as ancient law and practice had it, there is yet to be no express limit put to the generosity of the Christian heart.

THE GREAT APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES rose to confirm this testimony.—I was not present, said Paul, on the day of Pentecost. I was then the bitter enemy of Jesus, but he revealed himself to me as I went to persecute his followers. Blessed Jesus! You ask me how we should use our worldly property for him. I can only reply, We should give ourselves to him. We are not our own, being bought with a price. We should live with the utmost frugality, that we may have to give to Jesus and his cause. This has been the practice of his Churches from the first. Those of Macedonia, even in a season of great distress and poverty, still did not relax in this duty. They denied themselves in many things, but they did not abate anything of their contribution to uphold the truth of Christ. I was taught by the Spirit to inculcate the same duty strongly on the rich Church at Corinth, and I did so. And, in a word, I have left this for the permanent rule of the Christian Church to the end of time: "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." This is the amount of my testimony.

ALL THE SAINTS arose as soon as the Apostle of the Gentiles ceased. Jews and Gen-

tiles united their testimony. At the erection of the Tabernacle, said the Jews, we gave cheerfully,—we all gave, men and women; we gave what we possessed, and we had to be restrained from giving. At the building of the Temple we did in like manner. Our kings, our nobles, and our people rivaled one another in the offerings of gratitude and love. The Gentiles claimed to say that they had not fallen behind their brethren the Jews. They adopted their Scriptures for their guide, and conformed their conduct to their requirement, not merely joyfully devoting their tenth, but whatever else besides their circumstances enabled them to do or give. Widows were there—the widow of Sarepta, and she who had cast in her all to the treasury of the Lord. They were in great honor that day, as those who had best expounded the law by obeying it.

THE BIBLE, when these witnesses had spoken, was laid on the table. This, said the Judge, is the rule by which you are to determine. Mark its precepts, note its warnings, consider its promises, and enter into the spirit of its predictions. With these before you, my charge to you is to declare what you believe to be its doctrine on the subject of religious contribution—especially, what pro-

portion of his income a believer in revelation should give to the cause of God. And whether it is your opinion that in the judgment of this book he can consistently give less than a tenth, or whether he should not give more,—in some instances much more?

JESUS CHRIST presented himself when the Judge concluded, and said—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?"

To all who own themselves the followers of this Divine Redeemer we now say, "Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds." "Behold ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel." In the light of the evidence adduced we demand an answer to the question, Does the Bible require that every man shall give at least a tenth of his income to the cause of charity and of Christ? There can be only one answer—and there is not a demonstration in Euclid based on clearer or more satisfactory evidence—It does! As for those who dispute it, if there be any such, we refer them to the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall all meet there, and give account to one another and to him. Meantime let us inquire what

is our present duty, considering what has been said, and so have done.

1. We cannot help saying, our first duty is to be convicted of sin. Well does it become us to say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother when we saw the anguish of his soul, and would not hear." The law of God has been in our hands, to a large extent, a dead letter. Under the perverse idea that the gospel has released us from the precise demands of the law, thousands bearing the Christian name and making a Christian profession have felt no obligation to devote a portion of their property to him. Either they have formed no opinion on the subject, or they have entertained an incorrect one. Some have given, but far more from impulse than principle. They have been solicited and contributed—but had they been let alone they would have given nothing. An opinion requires to be created in the Church on this subject. And that it should be so in this age of the world is full of guilt.

2. Let us confess our sin. As we have much need, so have we also great encouragement to do it. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This gracious word, however, if not acted upon,

will greatly aggravate our condemnation. Sin known and proved, but not confessed, although God waits to be gracious, is very aggravated. Let it not be ours. Let each confess his own sin so far as he sees he has not been careful to know what is the mind of the Lord, or to act upon it. Let every one weigh the matter well, in its unhappy influence and fearful consequences, until his spirit is stirred within him, as it ought to be. Let us confess the sin of others, of the community, of the Church, and especially so far as we may have contributed to it, either by our neglect or evil example. It were a good omen if a spirit of humiliation were given, and sin was freely confessed to the Lord. And until such shall be manifested there can be little hope of amendment.

3. We should amend our ways. Confession without amendment is hypocrisy. Humiliation is good as a means ; but it is not an end. We should humble ourselves and turn unto the Lord. When Joshua abased himself before the Lord, as it was right he should do, because the people had been discomfited before Ai, on account of some sin which had not been detected, the Lord said unto him, "Get thee up ; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face ? Up, sanctify thy people :—thou canst not stand

before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." The sin must be put away. This is the law of the Lord universally. As Joshua set on foot an investigation in the camp, and pursued it till the offender was detected and destroyed, so must we do. Let us try ourselves whether we have kept the law of our God in this matter or not. Have we given the tenth to him at least? If not, say how much owest thou unto him, and "pay what thou owest." Do not delay this duty. Do it now. You cannot have peace of mind till you do so. It may cost you a struggle, but the end will be peace. Having entered on the right path, pursue it. You have got hold of the right principle, and be sure you keep it. Say with David, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Act thus, and you may add, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." Be sure and determined that as you have seen what the will of the Lord

is, you will conscientiously, faithfully, and perseveringly abide by it.

4. It is our duty to endeavor to lead others also into right views and practices. "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." We are accountable for all the influence we are capable of exercising. The education of the Church in right views of giving to the Lord is yet to be begun. For this purpose the school, the family, the pulpit, and the press, ought to be brought into requisition. Every teacher of the young should imbue them early with just views of contribution founded on the word of God; every parent should train his household to habits of giving, causing them to know this is a duty which God has made to be as indispensable as any other; the minister of the gospel should lift his voice like a trumpet, and give no uncertain sound, showing to the people the sin of withholding, and the duty of giving; the press should teem with tracts and volumes until all would know what the mind of the Lord is. Until the public mind is thus learned, the present wretched penury in all that pertains to the cause of God cannot be overcome. Prayer and diligence, however, with the promised blessing, will accomplish it.

5. Finally, let us keep steadily in view the great end ever to be aimed at in the consecration of our property to God. The mere act of giving is good, for it is a useful exercise of mind. The habit is one of the most salutary which can be formed for our own benefit. Still this is not the ultimate object. That is the subjection of the world to Jesus. We give that he may be honored. We pray, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and we use the means which Christ has appointed for the accomplishment of these desires. We have great encouragements and powerful inducements to employ them at the present time. "The field is the world," and God has opened it to his servants. Peace prevails upon the earth. As when Jesus came the temple of Janus was closed at Rome to intimate that peace universally prevailed, and as it was by that arrangement of Divine Providence the apostles had access to the nations around them, so now again, in a greatly widened circle, men are at peace with one another, and the way is opened to the messengers of the cross, to whom God is saying, Enter ye in and possess the land. Who can tell how long it may so continue? If the opportunity is not embraced, it will

no doubt be withdrawn. Then how bitter will be the remembrance of the lost opportunity! If it is embraced, how blessed the results! The gospel with its benefits will be conveyed to all men. "Judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." The highest condition of earthly prosperity and the universal acclamation of honor to Christ shall encircle the globe. "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

O Lord, wilt thou condescend to employ us to accomplish a consummation such as

this? Wilt thou deign to accept our offerings? "The silver and the gold are thine." We give them to thee. We lay them on thine altar. May it sanctify the gift! "Of thine own have we given thee." Amen.

THE END.



BV

772

.G62

59544.

Constable

Gold + the gospel.

1- 2087



48 428 740

1- 2087



